

THE CASE FOR POLARIZATION | CALCUTTA RISING | A URANIUM SMUGGLER'S STORY

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DAYS AND NIGHTS
WITH THE NEW PAPARAZZI

by DAVID SAMUELS

PLUS:
HOLLYWOOD'S
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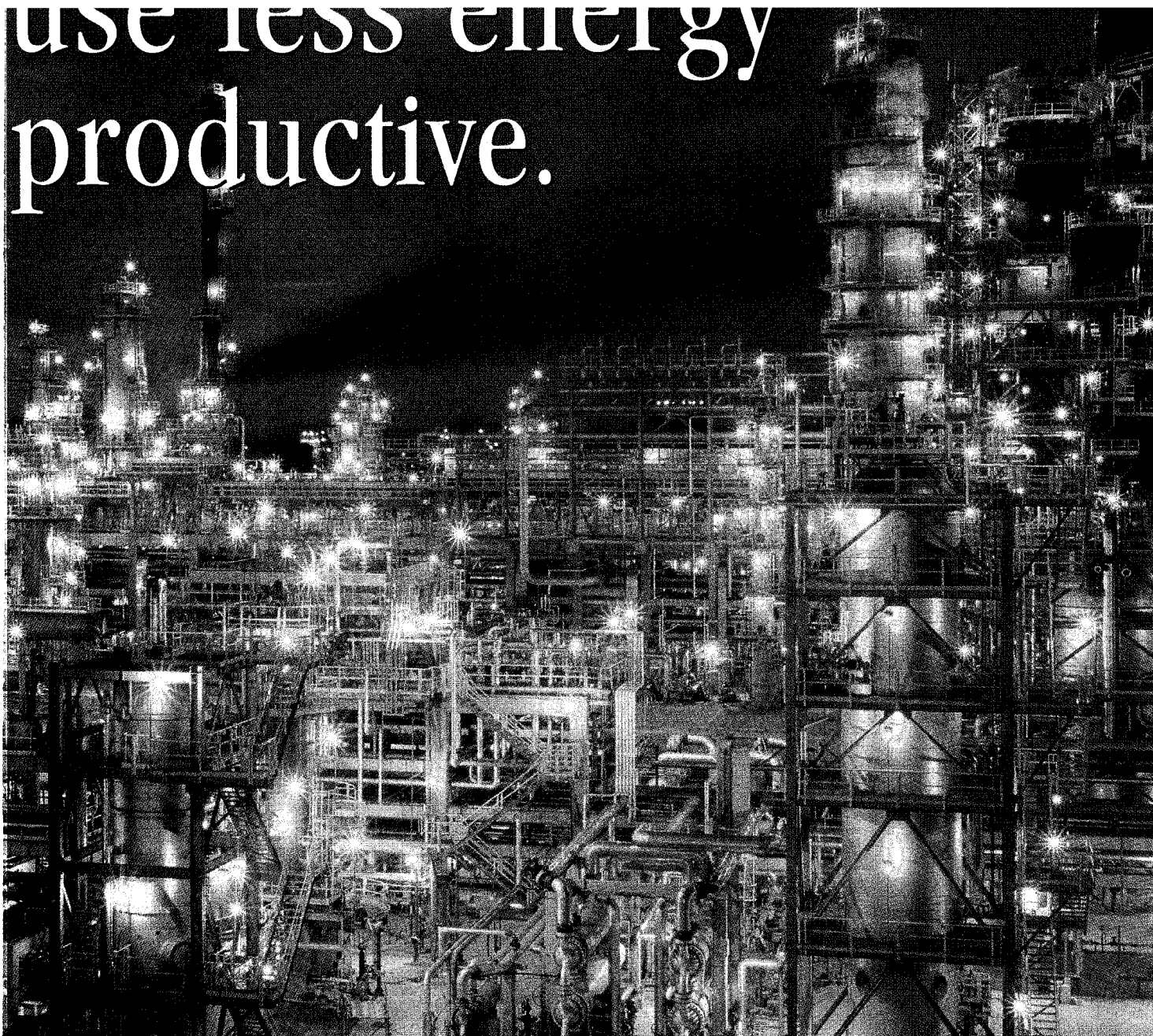
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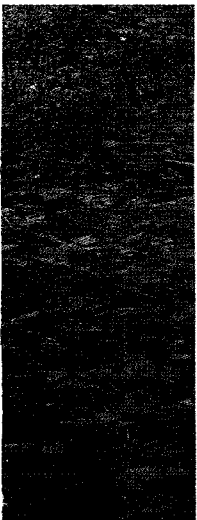


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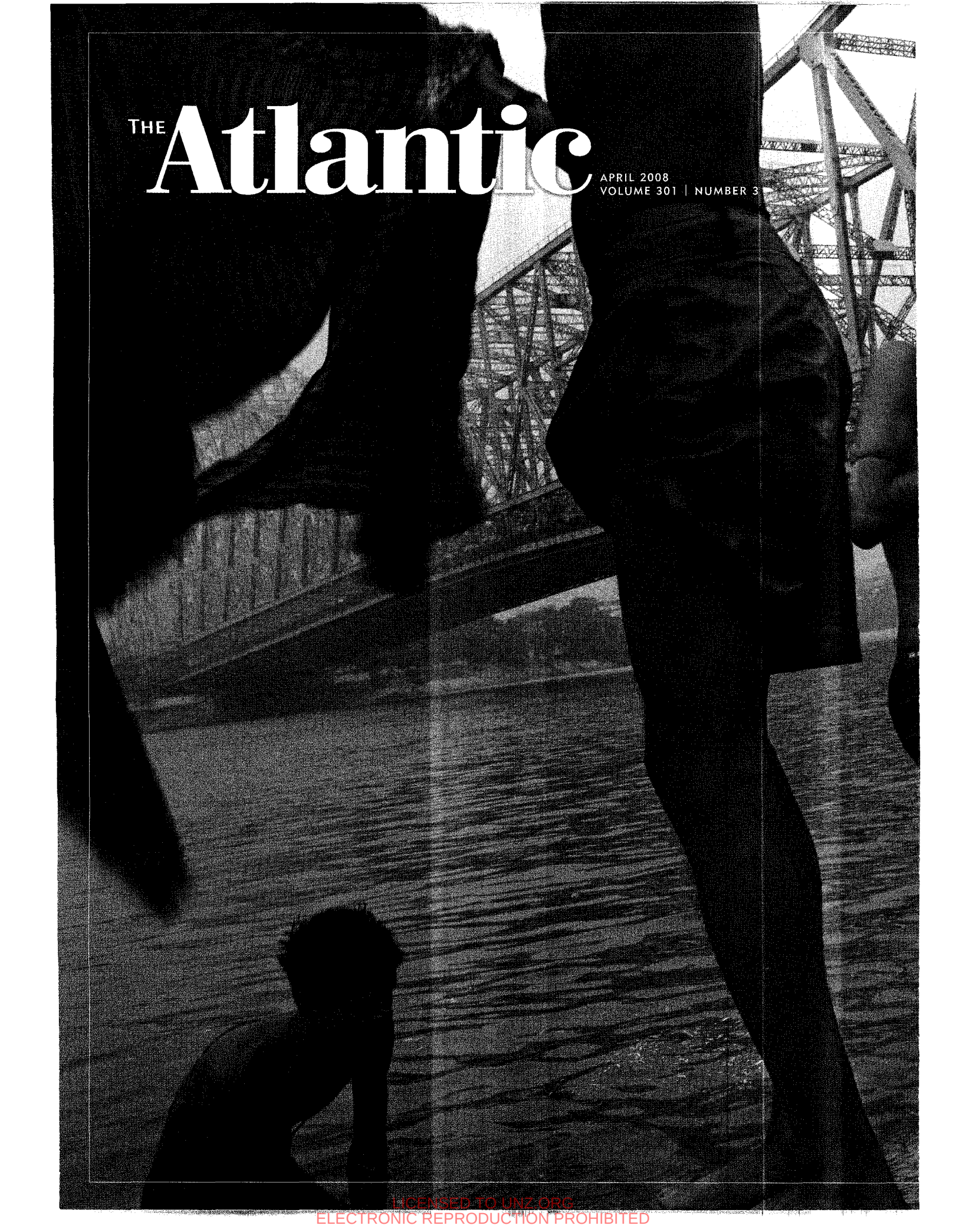
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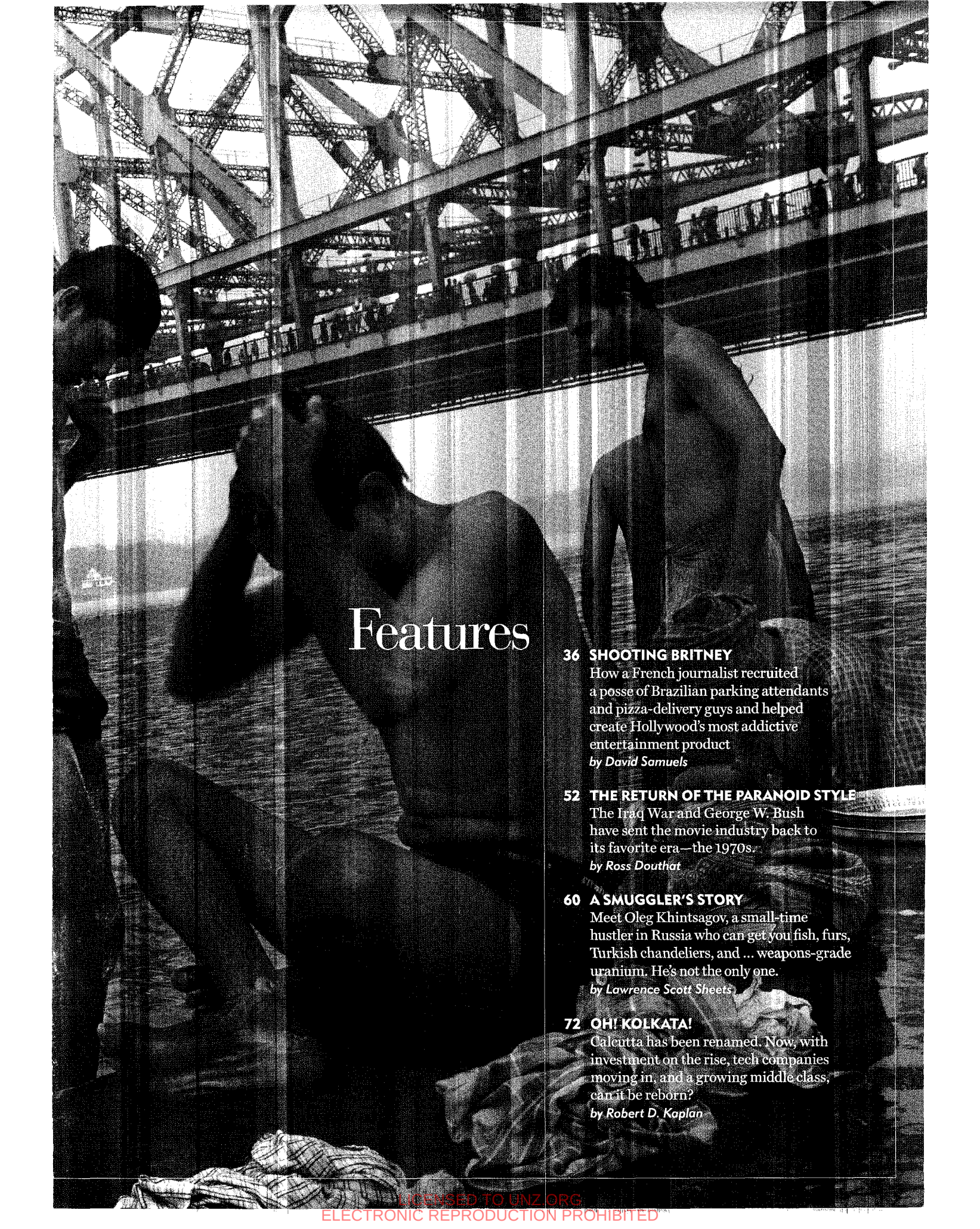


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A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a roller coaster track. The track is a complex lattice of steel, curving and looping through the upper half of the frame. In the lower foreground, the dark silhouette of a person is visible, looking up towards the track. The overall mood is dramatic and suspenseful.

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Joshua Hammer, who wrote this month's Travels article, narrates photos of his surprisingly peaceful sojourn in Kashmir.

PLUS: BLOG POSTS BY ANDREW SULLIVAN, JAMES FALLOWS, AND MORE

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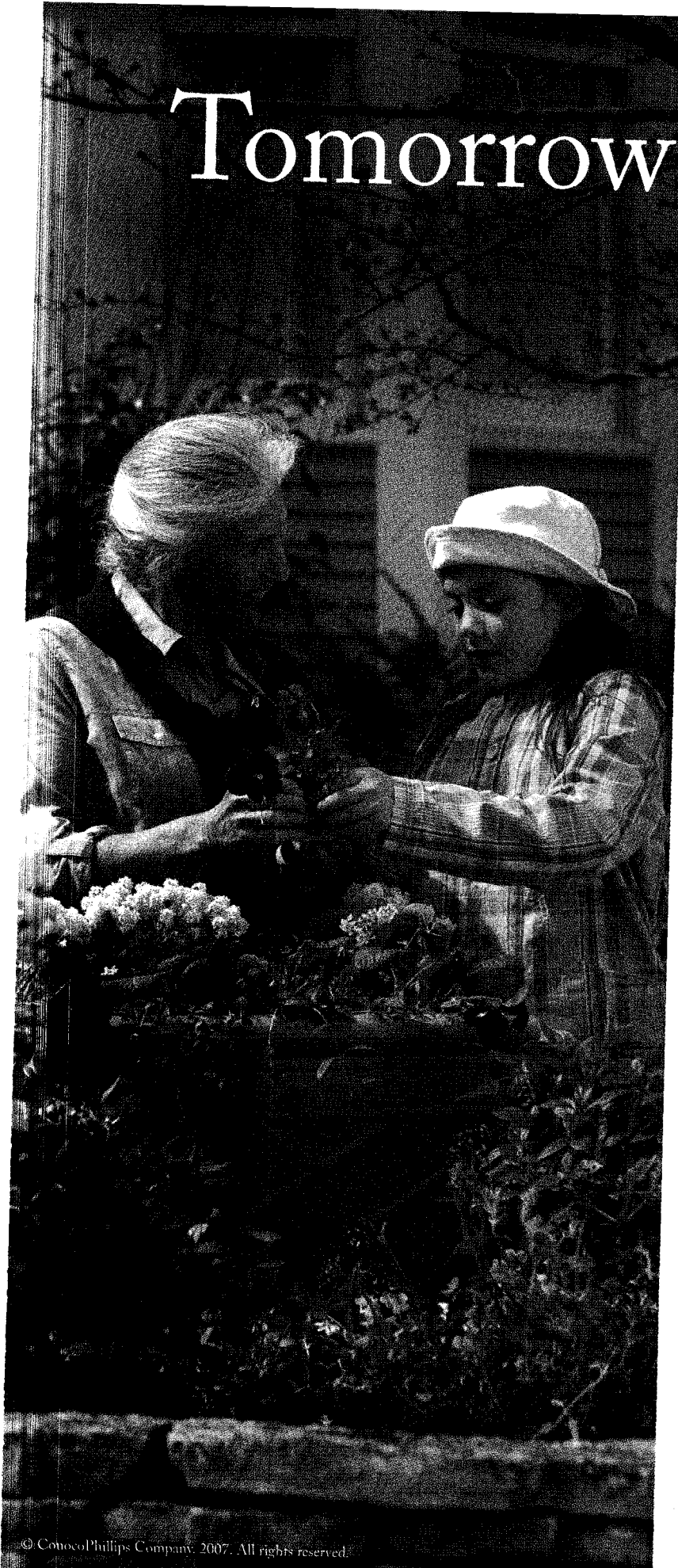
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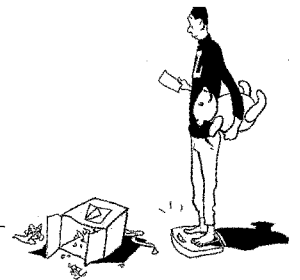
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

APRIL 2008 THE ATLANTIC



A NEW MIDDLE EAST

Jeffrey Goldberg's map of what the boundaries of Middle Eastern countries might be a generation from now ("After Iraq," January/February *Atlantic*) is objectionable for two reasons. First, the map is based on one drawn by Ralph Peters and published in the *Armed Forces Journal* in 2006, which Goldberg admits fed the paranoia of many Middle Easterners who saw it as a blueprint for an American plan to redraw the region's borders. Its publication in *The Atlantic* is likely to evoke a similar response, confirming the suspicions of those already suspicious.

There might still be an argument for such an exercise, if the discussion surrounding the map were a serious attempt to consider alternative developments in the region. But neither Peters nor Goldberg claims that the effort is serious. Instead, they regard it as an act of "knowing whimsy." Unfortunately, it is hardly "knowing." What they seem to know is that there are many ethnic groups in the region that might wish to become independent of the states that now control them. So they give them new states.

Both authors' basic misunderstanding is their thesis that the borders of Middle Eastern countries have little or no reality, having been created by European powers for their own reasons. In fact, Egypt and Iran are historical entities going back thousands of years within approximately their present boundaries. Afghanistan goes back centuries, as does Ethiopia (both of which are included in the author's Middle East). Turkey has carved out an existence that is unlikely to be challenged either by its own people or by its neighbors. Distinctions such as these must be the starting point of any discussion of the region's future.

Raymond D. Gastil
Deep River, Conn.

One can learn more about Jeffrey Goldberg's political opinions from the borders that he leaves alone than from the ones he changes in his map of the "new Middle East." While Goldberg drags his imperialist crayons across the region, tearing down borders both old and new, he tellingly makes no changes to either Israel or Kuwait. Since he draws so many other borders along ethnic and religious lines, why is Kuwait not made part of Shiite Iraq, and why does Israel maintain control over the Galilee and Negev, two areas with Arab majorities?

Could it be that Goldberg doesn't want to address the difficult questions that changing these particular borders would present? Redrawing Kuwait out of existence would be tantamount to admitting that the country has no history of nationhood and would remove the rationale for the Gulf War of 1991. Shrinking Israel would bring up the uncomfortable fact that the country rules many Arab citizens against their will. But these are the sorts of messy realities that one must confront when playing 21st-century colonialist map games.

Mark Kawar
Washington, D.C.

Jeffrey Goldberg replies:

Unlike Raymond Gastil, I do not believe that it is "objectionable" for a free press to pose questions about the future of the Middle East. I tend to think that Americans should be allowed to think and write freely, even about the Middle East, and even if our thinking and writing makes Middle Easterners "suspicious." Gastil confirms the argument that many countries in northeast Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia are particularly artificial by naming five that aren't.

Mark Kawar suggests that I drew the map with "imperialist crayons." The redrawn map reflects the well-known

desires of the Kurds, the Palestinians, the Baluchis, and the Africans of south Sudan for national liberation, rather than continued subjugation. Exactly how, then, is this imagined map a reflection of "imperialist" thinking?

DAVID SIMON'S BALTIMORE

As an avid fan of *The Wire*, I was disappointed by Mark Bowden's recent article ("The Angriest Man in Television," January/February *Atlantic*) on the show's creator, David Simon. Bowden argues that Simon's bitterness and anger have led him to color his fictional Baltimore with "suffering, stupidity, venality, and vice" at the expense of "selflessness, courage, and decency." In support of his argument, Bowden quotes the Yale sociologist Elijah Anderson, who writes, "What [*The Wire* has] left out are the decent people. Even in the worst drug-infested projects, there are many, many God-fearing, churchgoing, brave people who set themselves against the gangs and the addicts, often with remarkable heroism."

Yet the genius of *The Wire* is precisely that it rejects such facile distinctions between good guys and bad guys, cops and robbers, churchgoers and drug users. Rather than suffering from a dearth of "decent people," the show finds such people in all walks of Baltimore life.

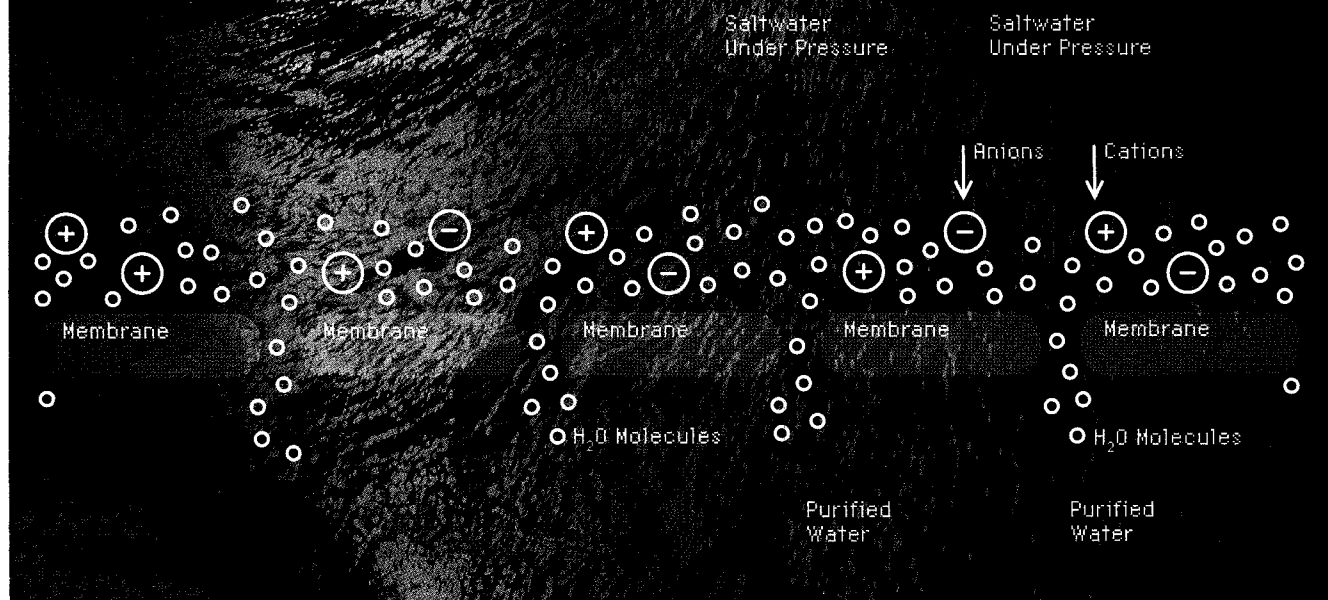
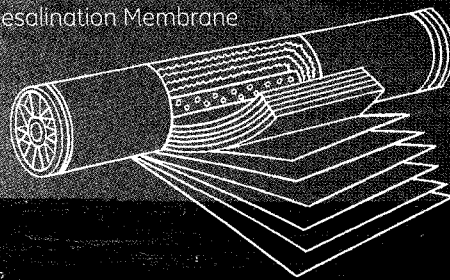
Near the end of his piece, Bowden admits that the fifth season of *The Wire* has targeted for derision two friends of his, William Marimow and John Carroll, who worked with David Simon at *The Baltimore Sun*. Ultimately, Bowden's insistence on the skewed bleakness of Simon's vision smacks more of an attempt to cushion his friends against caricature than it does of a genuine effort to capture the complexities that make *The Wire* such compelling television.

Peter Welch
Newton, Mass.

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EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Matt Miller is right that “localist” arrangements in education deliver maximum power to teachers’ unions (“First, Kill All the School Boards,” January/February *Atlantic*), which can draw on national resources and political connections, stultifying attempts at real improvement. But in a national system, the fashionable, counterevidential theories of the technocratic elite remain beyond correction since, being national, they have been removed from competition.

So try this instead: central funding for schools, but using a voucher system. Take the total national schools budget and divide it by the number of school-age children. Then adjust that figure by area, allowing for differential living costs across the U.S.—then pay out the vouchers to parents. They can be redeemed against education in any school that agrees to submit itself to annual government testing of basic literacy and numeracy standards, and nothing more.

Then let market forces do the rest. Anyone can try whatever trendy educational theory they like. But, after a bit, they won’t have many customers. Schools will shop for students (which will drive up discipline standards), and students will shop for schools (which will do the same for teaching standards).

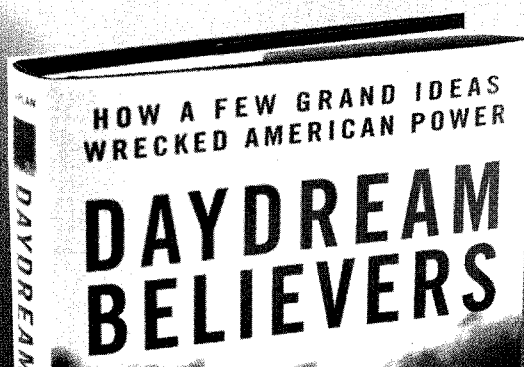
Expect some opposition from the teaching unions, though. They’ll have plenty of good reasons for keeping their nonaccountability to markets intact.

*M. T. Pearse
Houghton, N.Y.*

Matt Miller’s intentions are good and his ideas are coherent, but in the end, they will change very little on the ground. I teach in a border town in Texas, where roughly half of the 50,000 students currently enrolled in our independent school district will drop out. This is a staggering problem that will manifest itself in increased crime and general economic decline.

So what to do? Nationalize the education system, as Miller would have it? Anyone who teaches in a public-school classroom knows the answer: get outside of the system. Charter schools like KIPP, Uncommon Schools, Achievement First, and IDEA are proving that results don’t come from legislation. None of these schools has an issue with standardized tests, because they teach with far more rigor than the tests require—and they have a better idea about what should be taught than the “experts” in Washington, D.C. The things that make a difference are rarely mentioned in reports or legislation: zero-tolerance discipline systems; longer school days, weeks, and years; more homework; facilities that are separate from chaotic public schools; the ability to remove disruptive students; and, most important, teachers who are willing to do whatever it takes and be underpaid and overworked.

Instead of attempting to implement wholesale change in Washington, we



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should strengthen the existing charter framework that allows educators to bypass the local, state, and national bureaucracies and get back into the classroom with the tools and freedom they need.

*J. Goldstein
Brownsville, Texas*

Reading Matt Miller's article, I was surprised to learn that Horace Mann, on his 1843 "educational fact-finding" tour through Europe, found the town of Leipzig in Prussia. It is actually located in Saxony, and even in our days, any citizen of Leipzig would get rather angry at the suggestion that she or he was a Prussian.

*Ludwig Uhlig
Athens, Ga.*

Matt Miller replies:

Ludwig Uhlig is correct. Leipzig was part of Saxony at the time. Mann also visited schools in Berlin and elsewhere in Prussia proper. I regret the error.

POST-COLONIAL STUDIES

The makeover of imperialism continues. Paul Kennedy writes ("The Imperial Mind," January/February *Atlantic*) that it's "silly either to denounce or to rejoice in [the British empire's] existence," and that young Britons maintained the ramparts that held together the "thin crust of civilization." How uplifting that idea must be, and how convenient. And how incorrect. I cannot speak for other regions that Britain colonized, but I can provide some perspective from India. Between the beginning and end of colonization, India went from generating about a quarter of the gross world product to about 2 percent of it. Before colonization, India faced one famine perhaps every 75 years. During colonization, famine occurred every three to four years, causing deaths numbering in the dozens of millions. Since independence, there hasn't been a single famine, despite a threefold increase in population. Close to the end of empire, literacy levels were in single digits, and life expectancy was less than 30 years.

What were the empire's achievements? A massive transfer of wealth, a rapacious surplus-recovery system, the destruction of subsistence practices, the strangulation of industry, the obliteration of inland trade, and the denigration of a deep and complex cultural system.

My claim is not that India was perfect, but that it was a vibrant and evolving civilization—no thinner of crust than the European model—and that empire denuded and degraded it. To claim otherwise may soothe Caucasian guilt, but the argument that imperialism was needed to "preserve order in a fatefully flawed world" is as old as it is discredited.

*Sanjoy Chakravorty
Philadelphia, Pa.*

Paul Kennedy replies:

I'm not sure that Sanjoy Chakravorty knows how to read a text properly. I was not saying that empire-building was necessary to preserve order in a flawed world; I was summarizing Alan Sandison's conclusions about the basic views of Buchan, Kipling, Conrad, and Haggard. And I think Sandison was correct: the imperialist intellectuals were worried people, and rightly so. Their time was passing.

I also wonder about the tart reference to "Caucasian guilt," at least if it is personally meant. My four grandparents' lines are all Irish, and if any land took a battering from English expansionism, it was Ireland. But go back a few centuries, and you will see that those English took a battering from the Romans, the Danes, the Norsemen, and the Normans.

So I return to the final paragraph of my original piece: it is silly to have total approbation, or total denunciation, of some large imperial enterprise of past centuries. There were undoubtedly empires of plunder, bloodshed, disruption—some (the Nazis) entirely so. But it is ridiculous to argue that rule by a distant power (Roman, Spanish, British) left nothing positive behind.

The conclusive proof is, as always, in Monty Python's Life of Brian, and the wonderful scene—just try YouTube—

called "What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?" Use your imagination to transfer it to the case of Britain and India ... Cricket, anyone?

AID FOR AFGHANISTAN

Sarah Chayes's "Scents and Sensibility" (December *Atlantic*) is an encouraging profile of ingenuity and commitment in Afghanistan's south. As a critique of U.S.-funded programs, however, it is narrowly focused, citing only two such initiatives as examples, and these in forbidding Kandahar and Helmand, home to the bulk of the insurgency. One can point to dozens of successful—even lauded—USAID-backed efforts, such as the Construction Trades Training Center in Jalalabad, which trains Afghans in quality workmanship and sustains itself through materials-testing fees. Chayes's efforts are remarkable, but her article could have been stronger and more insightful had it presented a sample of similar initiatives and formulated reasons for their success or failure. Given the breadth of U.S. assistance around the world, it isn't difficult to find shortcomings, or examples of naive, wastrel Americans; more elusive are the formulas for success.

*Jason Anderson
Washington, D.C.*

Sarah Chayes replies:

I did not set out to write a comprehensive critique of USAID activities in Afghanistan. That would have been a different article. However, the numerous responses I have received from implementing partners in other parts of Afghanistan, as well as from former and current USAID personnel, thanking me for shedding light on the kind of frustrations they have experienced, indicate that my company's case is hardly an isolated one.

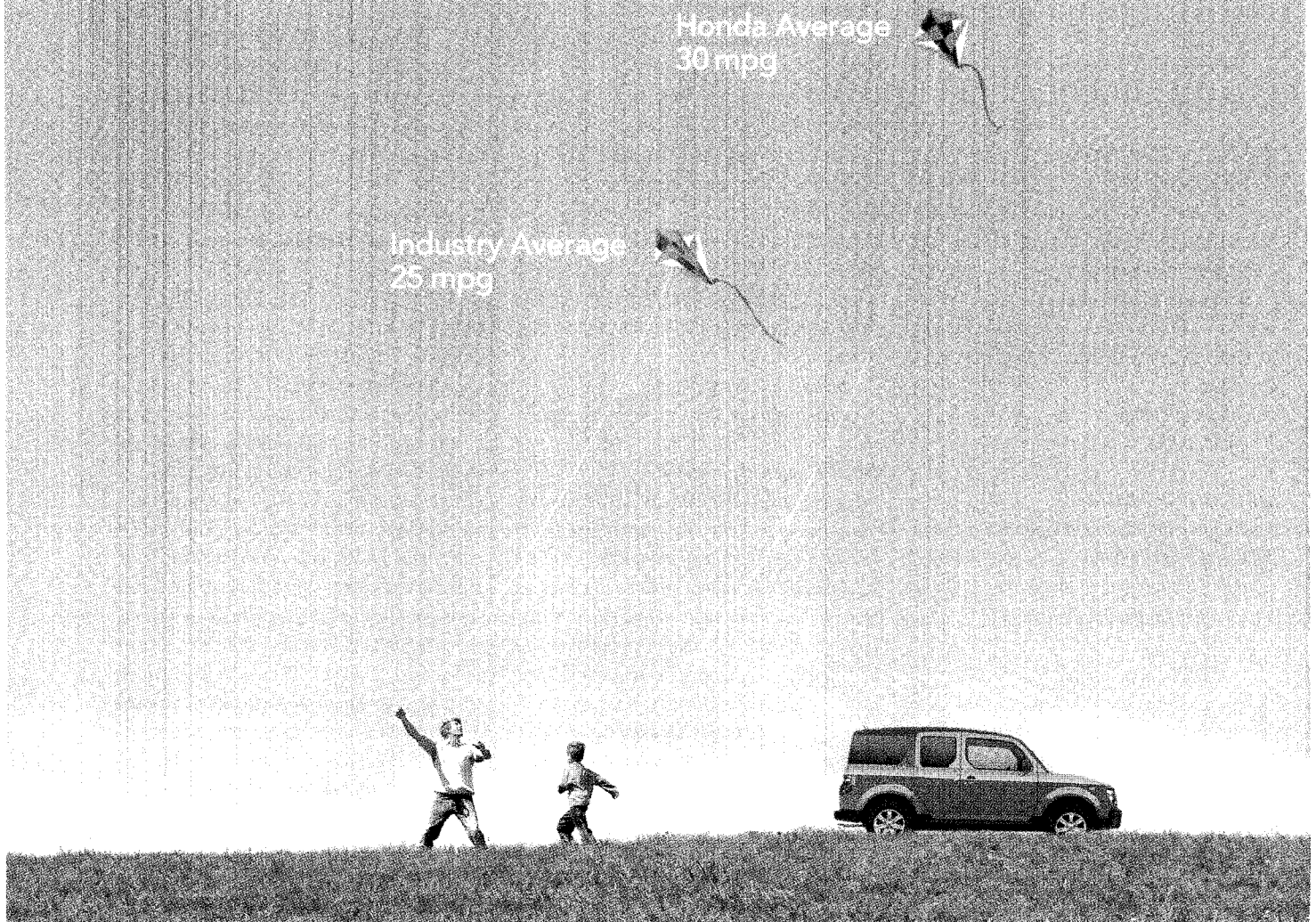
Editors' Note:

An item in the January/February Calendar incorrectly stated the number of times Sean Bell was shot. The police fired 50 shots at Bell, but an autopsy revealed that he was struck four times. We regret the error.

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COMMENT

Why polarization is good for us

The Case for Partisanship

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

In 1950, the American Political Science Association's Committee on Political Parties issued a clarion call, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," that today sounds quaint. The committee worried about insufficient party discipline and undue tolerance of dissent from the party line, arguing that the country needed political parties with "sufficient internal cohesion" to carry out their legislative agendas. The report urged the minority party to draw starker policy contrasts with the majority, and to act "as the critic of the party in power."

In short, the political scientists of the time wanted polarization. They got it, of course, and the result, in the general view, has been unseemly and unwelcome.

Polarized politics takes the form of a bitter, endless feud; cross-party alliances, once the mainstay of Washington life, are now rare. Yet as today's presidential candidates call for a less divisive kind of politics, it's worth recalling the 1950s. While polarization has its drawbacks, the alternative is often worse.

The mid-20th century is sometimes remembered as an era of cozy political consensus, but in fact the corridors of power echoed then with starkly disparate voices. Some officials advocated central planning of the economy in all but name; others wanted no federal safety net whatsoever. And of course, the country's elected representatives were as deeply divided over civil rights as their constituents

were. The politics were no less contentious than they are today. They were just less coherent.

The looser partisanship of the period was mostly the result of racism and its complex role in the politics of the time. The legacy of the Civil War had made the Democrats the party of southern white supremacists, but the legacy of the New Deal had also made them the party of northern liberals and many urban African Americans. These latter constituencies were demanding federal intervention in southern affairs to secure the rights of southern blacks. At the same time, many members of the GOP—the traditional home of black voters and the party of racial progress in many states—were

resisting these demands, which struck them as violating the principle of a modest federal government.

The result was a muddle. Nearly every congressional representative from the South was a Democrat and an opponent of civil rights, irrespective of his or her views about anything else. So while most Democrats were to the left of Republicans on economic and foreign-policy issues, many were more conservative than the average Republican on matters of race. Racial liberals and racial conservatives could be found in both parties.

Since the 1970s, however, the significance of civil-rights conflicts in American elections has declined sharply. As older representatives left Congress in the 1980s, political divisions became cleaner. Ideologically moderate politicians have not

there's little room for self-styled players to construct coalitions on the fly, and enhance their own power in the process. The growth in the lobbying industry might seem to belie the point, but consider Tom DeLay's post-1994 "K Street Project"—which pressured lobbying firms who wanted access on the Hill to hire more Republicans—or the swing of the pendulum back after the Democratic takeover in 2006. Power in Congress is firmly in the hands of the party leadership; lobbyists become less powerful, not more, in a polarized system.

But for voters, the boring new ways can be looked at in another way—they're straightforward. Elections have a predictable and easy-to-understand relationship to government action. Electing a Democrat means, on the margin, more

obtained substantial support from African Americans *and* segregationists. Both parties were nominally supportive of civil rights, and yet little of consequence was accomplished in the ensuing years. What's more, it was unclear to voters what course of action might break this inertia. Party affiliation was important because the majority party won the chairmanships of powerful committees that controlled many levers of government. Inconveniently, however, party affiliation didn't align tightly with ideology, leaving much of the real business of the country to be decided behind closed doors in Washington.

Of course, today's choice between two *prix fixe* ideological menus doesn't make everyone happy. Indeed, almost nobody agrees with either party's basic orientation on all questions facing the country. This breeds disgruntlement with the reductive nature of America's party system. But the real complaint here is not with the coherence of the parties, but with the quantity of them. Most democracies have at least three parties represented in their legislatures. That gives people more choices, while still giving them coherent choices.

That said, what usually causes the rise of new parties, or the loosening and confusion of existing ones, is the emergence of new social conflicts that are so overwhelmingly important that they strain the existing coalitions, scrambling party positions on everything else. Despite the ferocious rhetoric, the new issues of recent years—primarily related to sex and religion—haven't been controversial enough to disturb the existing alignment. Perhaps religion will one day do that, causing the depolarization of the parties along economic and foreign-policy lines, or the rise of a viable third party in some states. But of course, this cure for polarized parties would be worse than the disease. Strong clashes between coherent parties aren't a sign that the country is flying apart—they mean we're getting along better than we think. ▀

Matthew Yglesias, an Atlantic associate editor, blogs at matthewyglesias.theatlantic.com.

The looser partisanship of the 1950s was mostly the result of racism.

disappeared, but relatively conservative Democrats like Senators Ben Nelson and Mary Landrieu are, on most issues, now to the left of relatively liberal Republicans such as Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe. The meet-in-the-middle overlap is gone.

From a journalistic point of view, the resulting system is tragically dull. Legislative outcomes become a simple matter of vote-counting: either a party has a majority or it doesn't. There's little room for journalistic sleuthing, and what stories there are to tell lack the color and drama of, say, *Charlie Wilson's War*, in which an extremely hawkish Democratic congressman was able to persuade his party's leadership to back a massive covert war in Afghanistan.

For veteran Washington hands—wheelers and dealers in the lobbying game or at the major interest groups—the new system is worse than dull. It's emasculating. This is why political elites find polarization so distasteful. In a polarized world, elections and procedural rules largely determine policy outcomes;

spending on the federal safety net and more government regulation, while electing a Republican produces policies more favorable to business interests. You don't necessarily get everything you want (ask any liberal disappointed by the continued flow of funds for the Iraq War), but at least on domestic measures, things move predictably.

Under the looser system, it was hard to know where the parties really stood, or what effect elections might have. In 1956, for example, the voters of Idaho turned out their incumbent conservative Republican senator, Herman Welker, in favor of the Democrat Frank Church, whose liberal views included strong support for civil rights. Church's election helped preserve the Democratic Party's slender majority in the Senate, despite pickups by several Republicans. But as a result, the Judiciary Committee—with its jurisdiction over civil-rights issues—came under the gavel of Mississippi's James Eastland, a die-hard segregationist.

In the same election, both Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson had



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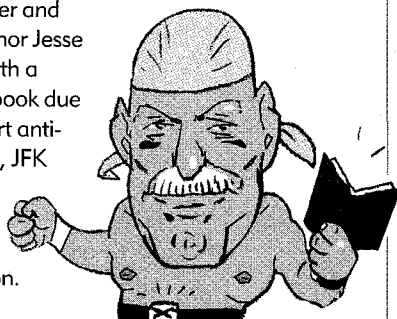


What to watch for in the weeks ahead Calendar

COMPILED BY MATTHEW QUIRK

APRIL Party of One

1 Former pro wrestler and Minnesota Governor Jesse "The Body" Ventura flirts with a presidential run in an odd book due out today. Part memoir, part anti-government paranoia (9/11, JFK conspiracies), the book features Ventura imagining his own upstart 2008 campaign and assassination.



APRIL What Happened in Vegas

7 O. J. Simpson is back behind the defendant's table in Las Vegas today. Last September, Simpson and some armed associates allegedly raided a sports-memorabilia dealer's hotel room in a "sting" operation to reclaim items that Simpson says were rightfully his.



APRIL

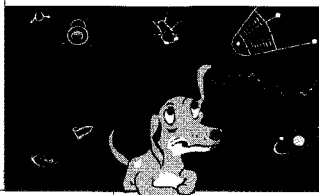
15-20

The Papal Chase

Benedict XVI makes his first papal visit to the U.S. this week. He'll start at the White House before moving on to New York for a speech to the UN and a stop at Ground Zero.

APRIL Sputnik, Apollo, Chandrayaan

9 Lunar one-upmanship is back—in Asia, anyway. Today, India launches Chandrayaan, an unmanned moon orbiter, in an effort to keep pace with space flights and lunar probes from Japan and China. The U.S. plans to join the fray with a moon base in 2020.



APRIL

11-14

Smoking Mad

In a move to "level the playing field," French President Nicolas Sarkozy has proposed taxing European imports from countries (such as the United States) that have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol. EU environment ministers will debate this proposal and others at a meeting this weekend.

APRIL Peace at Virginia Tech

16 Today marks the first anniversary of the Virginia Tech massacre. After the tragedy, suggestions to destroy Norris Hall, where most of the 32 victims died, were rejected. The building will instead house a new Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention.

APRIL Suppress Secretary?

21 Former White House press secretary Scott McClellan's memoir, due out today, may—or may not—contain more than the usual West Wing name-dropping. His publisher hinted last year that McClellan might point fingers at White House higher-ups and even the president in the Valerie Plame leak scandal.

APRIL A Haditha Court-Martial

28 Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Chessani, the commanding officer of the marines involved in the 2005 Haditha massacre in Iraq and the highest-ranking officer charged in the case, today faces court-martial at Camp Pendleton in California. He could receive more than two years for dereliction of duty and failing to properly report and investigate the incident.

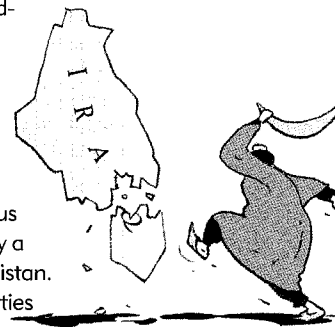
APRIL Matchmakers

28-30 The endlessly tinkered-with, always frustrating computer-and-poll ranking system that determines which teams play in college football's championship game will be tinkered with again this year—and may even come to include a playoff. That's one of several proposals under consideration this week, when the conference commissioners for the Bowl Championship Series meet in Miami.



ALSO IN APRIL Pondering Partition

A referendum scheduled for this month may allow part of Iraq's heavily Shiite south to split from the national government and form a "semi-autonomous region"—essentially a mini-state like Kurdistan. The main Shiite parties are divided on the issue.



Spring Forward

The last of 3,200 additional marines deploying to Afghanistan arrive to battle growing violence and the Taliban's anticipated spring surge. At 30,000 troops, the U.S. presence will be the greatest since the invasion and will compensate for forces that NATO has not provided.

PRIMARY SOURCES

FOREIGN AFFAIRS **Somalia on the Mediterranean?**

The Gaza Strip is famously wracked by political and religious turmoil, but much of its unrest can be traced to family feuds, according to a report by the International Crisis Group. After the second intifada, Israel eviscerated the Palestinian Authority's security establishment, and clans stepped in to deal with their members' crimes—up to and including murder. Now these families have consolidated power by establishing their own autonomous zones and quasi-governmental functions. Blood loyalties trump political ones, and Hamas, which took over the government of Gaza in mid-2007, has been unable to extinguish the clan vendettas or to weaken the family bonds that undermine its authority. The clan structures represent



IDEOLOGY ISN'T the only thing dividing them

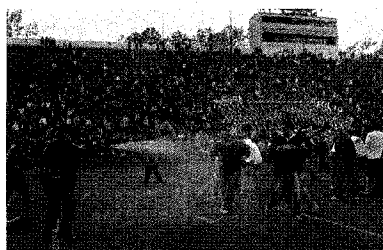
a "double-edged sword," the authors suggest: they are the rare organizing principle that has stayed constant and reliable during a period of deprivation and unrest, arguably preventing a "total collapse" in Gazan society, but at the same time they ensure that Gazans remain persistently divided, which

contributes to the growing disorder in the territory. Hamas will have to reconcile with the families, the report argues; otherwise, they will provide a potent focal point for resistance to Hamas's (often brutal) attempts to consolidate power.

—"Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families," *International Crisis Group*

EDUCATION **The Old College Riot**

Is there an American analogue to that persistent European scourge, the soccer hooligan? Two economists at the University of Colorado suggest that it could be the college football fan. They find that arrests for all sorts of beligerence and bad behavior rise after home football games—and skyrocket after upsets, whether the home team is on the winning or the losing end. The researchers examined crime data from 26 police stations that had jurisdiction over college campuses from 2000 to 2005, and then compared game-day arrests with typical daily crime stats. Although away games had no effect on the crime numbers, after home games arrests spiked in all the categories studied—from assaults to vandalism. Upsets triggered even greater havoc. Disorderly-conduct arrests jumped by 93 percent after upset victories, for instance, and DUIs increased 57 percent after upset defeats. The authors reject some common psychological explanations



THINK HOW BAD it could have been if they had lost ...

for the mayhem—the idea that fans mimic the violence they see unleashed on the gridiron, or the idea that rioting is a way of relieving frustration after a loss. But one thing the authors say they couldn't discount as a root of game-day evils: lots and lots of booze. Even though all the stadiums in the sample had banned liquor sales, the authors note that "it is difficult to rule out the possibility that the relationship between college football games and aggressive behavior is entirely driven by alcohol consumption."

—"College Football Games and Crime," Daniel I. Rees and Kevin T. Schnepel, *University of Colorado*

PSYCHOLOGY **Unforgettable**

The notion that we repress memories of sexual trauma dates back to the dawn of the Freudian era, but three Canadian psychologists report that such memories tend to be among the hardest to repress. The psychologists surveyed 44 women who'd sought counseling for sexual traumas ranging from childhood abuse to assault in adulthood. The women were asked about the persistence of three memories from the same general time in their lives: the sexual trauma, a nonsexual trauma, and a positive experience. The recollections of sexual trauma proved to be the most enduring, and the subjects relayed them with greater detail, emotion, and vividness than the other memories. Curiously, the women were much more likely to think they'd misremembered the sexual trauma than the nonsexual trauma or the positive incident. In effect, trauma survivors excelled at remembering sexual trauma but found it more difficult to recall whether they'd remembered it correctly.

—"Are memories for sexually traumatic events 'special'? A within-subjects investigation of trauma and memory in a clinical sample," Kristine A. Peace, Stephen Porter, and Leanne ten Brinke, *Memory*

TOP: AP PHOTO/HATEM MOUSSA
BOTTOM: AP PHOTO/NEW HAVEN REGISTER/CHRIS UNICE

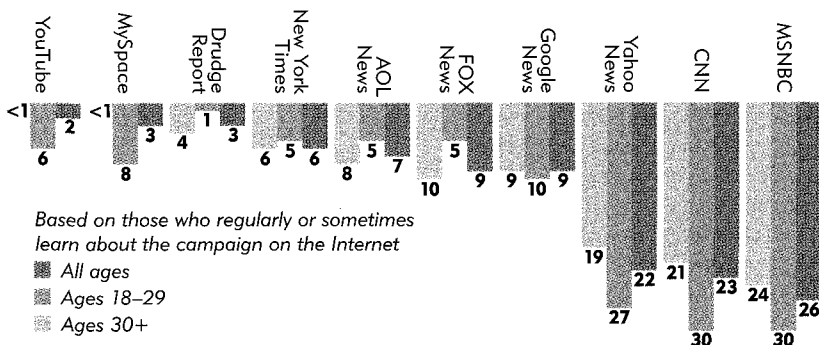
POLITICS

Webbing the Vote

The YouTube presidential debates were just the tip of the iceberg: according to a new Pew Research Center study, Americans are turning increasingly to online sources for election coverage. Although television continues to outperform print newspapers and the Internet as the main source of campaign news, the percentage of people who say they get most of their news about the election from television dropped from 68 percent during the 2004 race to 60 percent in late 2007, while the percentage of people who reported that they turn primarily to the Internet for news about the presidential candidates more than doubled, from 6 percent in 2004 to 15 percent at the end of 2007. Nearly half of 18-to-29-year-olds report that they get most of their election news online, compared with 21 percent in 2004. The Internet gets slightly higher marks for objectivity: 45 percent of the people who consume news online believe that

Where People Get Campaign News Online

In percent (respondents could volunteer more than one outlet)



Based on those who regularly or sometimes learn about the campaign on the Internet

- All ages
- Ages 18-29
- Ages 30+

Republican and Democratic views get roughly equal attention on political Web sites and blogs, whereas 41 percent of all Americans feel the same way about general media coverage of the campaigns. However, the new media landscape may be less diverse than some of the hype would suggest: the study finds that online readers relied overwhelmingly on only a few popular news sites, with MSNBC, CNN, and Yahoo News

topping the list. And the growing popularity of political coverage on the Internet doesn't necessarily correlate with a rising appetite for news. As the study reports, "a majority of web users ... say they 'come across' campaign news and information when they are going online to do something else."

—"Social Networking and Online Videos Take Off: Internet's Broader Role in Campaign 2008," Andrew Kohut et al., Pew Research Center



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SOCIOLOGY

The A's Have It

Expectant parents have long considered the meaning behind names before choosing one for their child, but a recent study suggests it's our initials that help determine our fates. The authors argue that our preference for our names is so strong that we unconsciously gravitate toward people, places, objects, and outcomes that begin with the same letter as our moniker: Mary is more likely to marry Mark, drive a Mazda, and move to Maryland than is Virginia, who's more likely to marry Virgil, drive a Volvo, and move to Virginia. To test whether the influence of initials could override a conscious desire to succeed at something, the authors turned to professional baseball players and graduate students. An analysis of Major League Baseball records from 1913 to 2006 showed that players whose first or last name started with the letter K (the symbol for strikeout) were slightly

more likely to fulfill the destiny suggested by their initials: they struck out 18.8 percent of the time, compared with 17.2 percent for other players. Likewise, MBA students whose first or last name began with a C or a D tended to end up with lower grade-point averages, and law students with A or B in their initials tended to end up at better-ranked programs than those whose initials included a C or a D. Students with initials from the very beginning of the alphabet did not, however, earn higher grades than those with grade-irrelevant initials. The authors explain that performance reflects both motivation and ability, so although having a name tied to "easy-to-achieve negative outcomes" might hurt you, having a name whose first letter reflects "hard-to-achieve positive outcomes" may not offer a boost.

—"Moniker Maladies: When Names Sabotage Success," Leif D. Nelson and Joseph P. Simmons, *Psychological Science*



NEXT TIME, try Denmark.

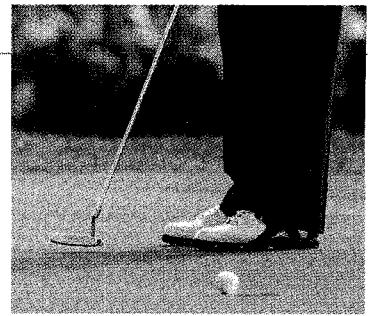
MIGRATION

Continental Divide

The debates in France and Britain may get the lion's share of attention, but if you're looking for places in Europe where immigration is *really* controversial, a new study suggests, head east and south. Data from a pan-European survey reveal three distinct types of attitudes toward immigration on the Continent. Scandinavians tend to be "lenient," displaying few categorical prejudices against foreigners and expressing an overall generosity toward immigrants. Western Europeans likewise tend to lack generalized prejudices, but they have specific preferences as to which immigrants ought to be admitted, emphasizing markers such

as education and income. Meanwhile, Europeans from eastern and southern countries—including Poland, Hungary, Greece, and Italy—tend to have sweepingly negative attitudes toward foreigners settling in their countries. Many people in this last group, whom the author labels "strict gatekeepers," hail from countries that are relatively new to the EU and arguably lack the resources necessary to assimilate immigrants; the study also notes that the eastern European countries in the sample tend to have experienced a post-Cold War revival of nationalistic fervor.

—"Guarding the gates of Europe: A typological analysis of immigration attitudes across 21 countries," Eva G. T. Green, *International Journal of Psychology*



HE HAS THE BEST "holistic cue" in the whole tournament.

SPORTS

Don't Even Think About It

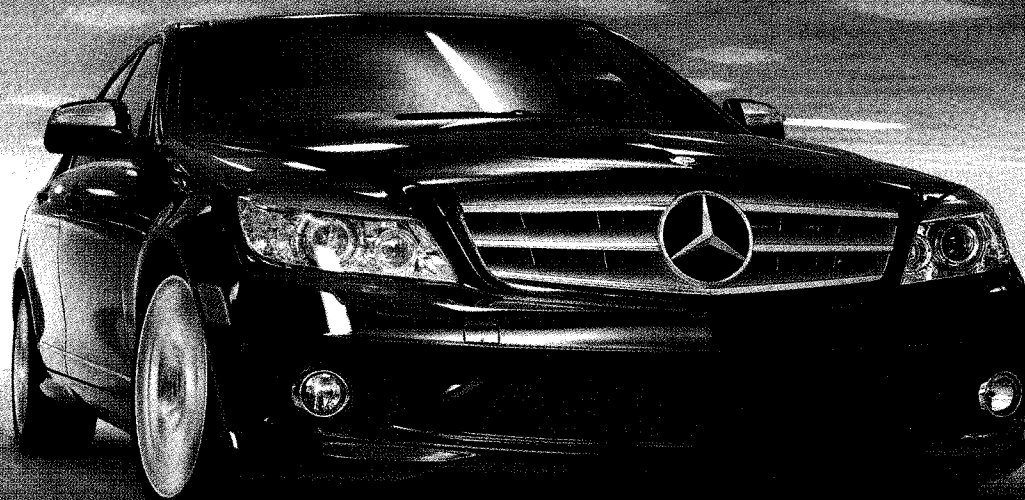
There are two common explanations for why some athletes perform poorly in the clutch: either the pressure distracts them, or it causes them to focus too intently on usually automatic actions. To test the competing theories, two researchers studied 20 experienced Australian golfers in a low-stakes contest and a high-stakes competition with monetary prizes. The participants played three 10-putt rounds, and they were given different instructions at the start of each: first, they were told to concentrate on three things that were irrelevant to the task; then to focus on three words that related to technical aspects of their swing, such as *arms*, *weight*, or *acceleration*; and finally to concentrate on a single "holistic cue word" describing their intended movement, such as *smooth*. In the high-pressure situation, participants did worse when thinking about words related to execution; overall, golfers in both situations did best while concentrating on the holistic cue. The authors speculate that focusing on a cue word prevents experts from trying to "consciously control their movements under pressure," which suggests that overthinking, rather than distraction, may be the greater danger facing athletes in the clutch.

—"Choking under pressure in sensorimotor skills: Conscious processing or depleted attentional resources?" Daniel F. Gucciardi and James A. Dimmock, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*

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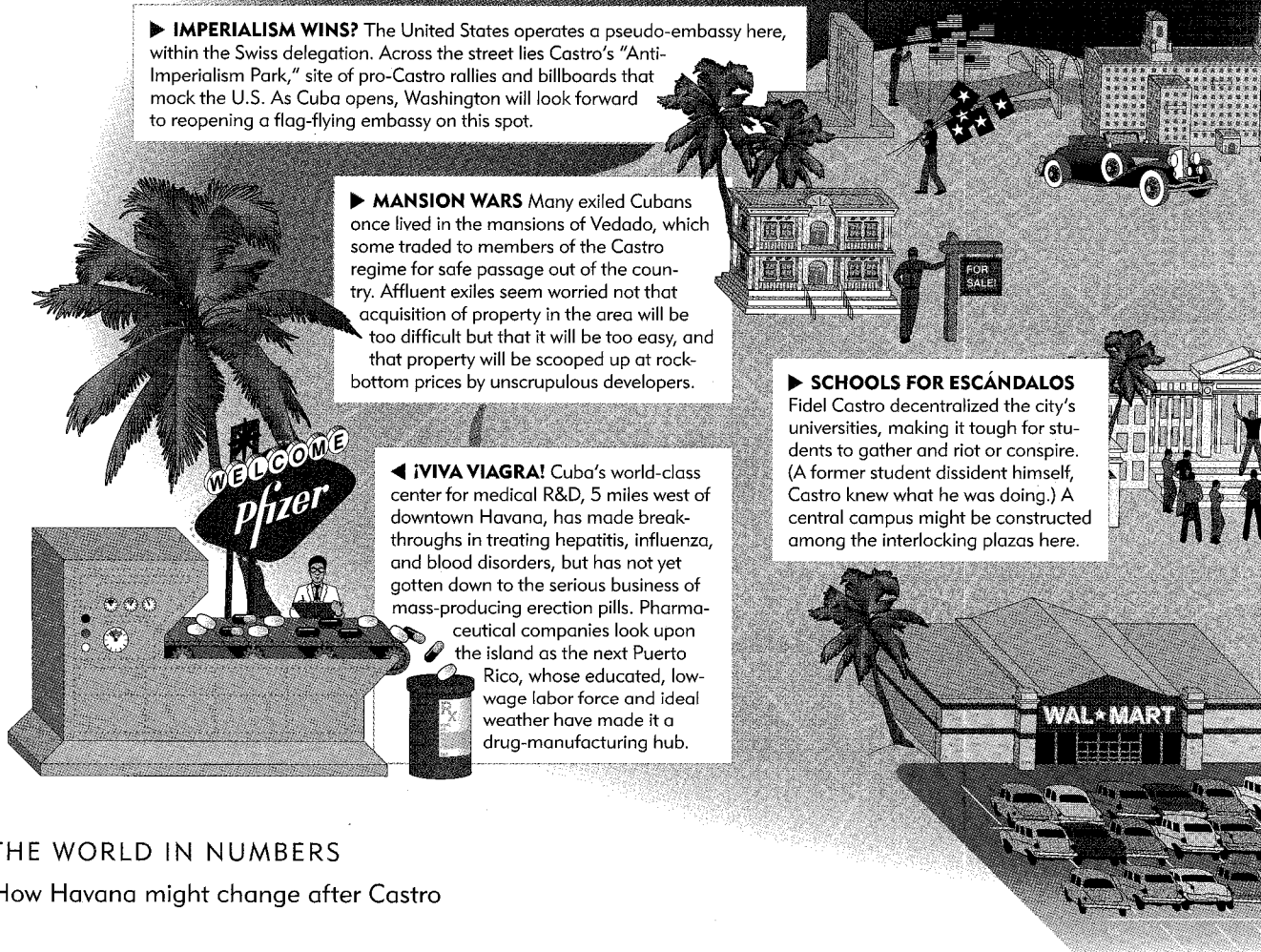
¡CUBA LIBRE!

► **IMPERIALISM WINS?** The United States operates a pseudo-embassy here, within the Swiss delegation. Across the street lies Castro's "Anti-Imperialism Park," site of pro-Castro rallies and billboards that mock the U.S. As Cuba opens, Washington will look forward to reopening a flag-flying embassy on this spot.

► **MANSION WARS** Many exiled Cubans once lived in the mansions of Vedado, which some traded for members of the Castro regime for safe passage out of the country. Affluent exiles seem worried not that acquisition of property in the area will be too difficult but that it will be too easy, and that property will be scooped up at rock-bottom prices by unscrupulous developers.

◀ **¡VIVA VIAGRA!** Cuba's world-class center for medical R&D, 5 miles west of downtown Havana, has made breakthroughs in treating hepatitis, influenza, and blood disorders, but has not yet gotten down to the serious business of mass-producing erection pills. Pharmaceutical companies look upon the island as the next Puerto Rico, whose educated, low-wage labor force and ideal weather have made it a drug-manufacturing hub.

► **SCHOOLS FOR ESCÁNDALOS** Fidel Castro decentralized the city's universities, making it tough for students to gather and riot or conspire. (A former student dissident himself, Castro knew what he was doing.) A central campus might be constructed among the interlocking plazas here.



THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

How Havana might change after Castro

Bay of Capitalist Pigs

BY GRAEME WOOD

The American embargo on Cuba has spanned 48 years—a lifetime for many Cubans, and nearly all of Fidel Castro's tenure as Maximum Leader. Now that Castro, 81 and ailing, has officially retired, the embargo's end may be near. Some think Fidel's brother Raúl (assuming he successfully consolidates

power) might free Cuba's economy and allow private investment.

U.S. business interests have been eagerly awaiting Castro's departure—one way or another—for years. Otto Reich, who worked within the Bush administration on post-Castro planning and other Cuba issues from 2001 to

2004, says that for a time, after the Cold War ended, construction companies were pre-positioning materials in Florida warehouses in anticipation of a Cuban counterrevolution. Bulldozers and cranes waited to cross the Florida Straits and start building condos and shopping centers.

▼ **WHERE THE FISH WILL BE BITING** The sewage system, already overburdened, spews untreated human waste directly into the Florida Straits, a problem likely to worsen as Havana opens. Fish feed on the flushings, so this area, a favorite with amateur anglers, may become even more popular.

◀ **SEEDING THE NEXT REVOLUTION?** American hotel chains and casinos will be interested in the grand Hotel Nacional, though the Cuban military, which now runs it, may be unwilling to give it up. Some exiles do not want to see the hotel's old Parisien casino reopened. Fifty years ago, gamblers and gangsters helped stoke popular resentment toward corrupt elites, opening the door to revolution.

◀ **BIG-BOX HEAVEN** Cubans have not been able to go shopping since the 1950s—that's half a century of pent-up consumer demand. The area around Havana's main baseball stadium, with its ample parking, could sprout Wal-Mart-style emporiums. The spare, rotting houses near the stadium hold little sentimental value for exiles; political opposition to the wrecking ball might be weaker here than in many other parts of the city.

◀ **ALL OF YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS** A Chinese-Israeli partnership is investigating the use of this grassy space as the site for a mammoth convention center. The group would try to lure trade shows from Chicago or San Francisco with a futuristic hotel and tower, reminiscent of Dubai's, rising up from the bay.

◀ **SMIFFING ON THE DOCK OF THE BAY** Grand plans include turning the marina into a dock for cruise ships and yachts, displacing commercial shipping. The area near the waterfront—now described by one urban planner as looking "like wartime Beirut"—will make lovely loft-apartment space for buyers who don't mind the stink of chemical waste wafting in from nearby factories.

◀ **THE OLD CITY** Ramshackle, crowded Old Havana started drawing UNESCO funding in the 1980s. Planners want to bar automobiles and build several multistory parking garages on the neighborhood's fringes. Some 85,000 *habaneros* live in Old Havana; experts say another 2,000 tourists could stay there without disrupting its character.

◀ **RUM AND (INDUSTRIAL) COKE** Havana's bayfront is blighted by old factories, many of them shuttered. The sugar industry has been in decline for years, and rum distilleries await the return of old labels like Bacardi, currently in exile in Miami and Puerto Rico.

Optimists envision post-embargo Havana as a capitalist paradise, restored to glory by the healing powers of the free market. But an invasion of developers might have its drawbacks as well—particularly for a city with Havana's storied history and distinctive architecture.

New residents and tourists will strain resources. Joseph L. Scarpaci, an urban geographer at Virginia Tech, says Havana already shudders under its population's demands. It is plagued by brownouts, even though air-conditioning is still rare.

Fresh water is scarce, and human waste flows untreated into the sea.

Nicolás Quintana, 82, a Cuban American architect heading a Florida International University project for Havana's post-Castro future, likens the city's condition to that of postwar Warsaw or, less fancifully, post-Zhivkov Sofia. For decades, the island's construction materials have gone to the military, and as a result, Havana is crumbling.

Quintana dreams of returning in time to save Havana from collapse but before unchecked growth robs the city of its character. His project, an initiative with

support from Cuban exiles—among them economists, ecologists, and urban planners—calls for preserving the city's narrow streets and short blocks, and encouraging concentrated vertical development, creating something like "a latinized Paris."

Whenever Havana opens, it will face a clash of interests—between developers and preservationists, and between moneyed exiles and poor *habaneros*. This map, based loosely on the visions of Quintana, Cuban American economist Jorge Sanguinetti, and others who've been eager for Castro's end, depicts what might follow, and how the city might be rebuilt. ▀

Graeme Wood is an Atlantic staff editor.



IRAQ

Why even the most-dubious statistics influence our thinking

Body Counting

BY MEGAN MCARDLE

How many Iraqis have died because of the American invasion? It would be nice to know the local price of Saddam Hussein's ouster, five years on. Many researchers have produced estimates. Unfortunately, these range from 81,020 to 1 million. The wide variance, of course, speaks to considerable uncertainty, although the individual figures are often absurdly precise.

The figure most often quoted, and until recently regarded by many as the most scientific, comes from a study published in *The Lancet*, a prominent British medical journal, just before the 2006 election. That study, which made headlines worldwide and was cited by war opponents from Ted Kennedy to Al-Jazeera, found that a shocking 601,027 Iraqis had died violent deaths since the U.S. invasion. But the timing of the study's publication and the size of its estimate have attracted a great deal of criticism; its authors, mostly researchers at Johns Hopkins University, have

been accused of everything from bias to outright fraud.

Research by the World Health Organization, published in January in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, has cast further doubt. It covered basically the same time period and used similar statistical techniques, but with a much larger sample and more-rigorous interview methods. It found that the *Lancet* study's violent-death count was roughly four times too high. This has a familiar ring to it. A smaller study, released by the Johns Hopkins team in 2004, had been quickly contradicted by a larger UN survey suggesting that it had overstated excess mortality by, yes, about a factor of four.

"Conflict epidemiology," the study of war's health effects, is by its nature an inexact science. War and anarchy are not friends to careful, by-the-book research. We have little idea how many people now live in Iraq; ascertaining the number who have died there is a tall order. And huge disparities in death estimates are

not unique to the conflict in Iraq; cluster sampling, the best-regarded survey technique for use in war-torn places, has produced estimates in other conflict zones, such as Darfur, that vary by factors of three or more.

All casualty studies have problems. But the Johns Hopkins study's methodology was particularly troublesome. The number of neighborhoods the team sampled was just above the minimum needed for statistical significance, and the field interviewers rushed through their work. The interviewers were also given some discretion over which households they surveyed, a practice generally regarded as unwise. And though such latitude calls for closer-than-normal supervision of field interviewers, the Johns Hopkins team seems to have provided little. Any of these choices can be defended because of the dangers, and the authors have said as much, claiming, basically, that this was the best they could do in a bad situation.

DIA HAMID/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

American experience

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THE AMERICAN IDEA

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EDITED BY ROBERT VARE

Month after month, in groundbreaking pieces by the astonishing roster of writers it has nurtured and recruited since its founding, *The Atlantic Monthly* has captured the national mood. Now Robert Vare has selected and introduced the best essays, profiles, features, criticism, fiction, and poems from 150 years of *The Atlantic*, creating an unmatched portrait of America’s history and identity.

But that raises an unwelcome question: If this is the best we can do, should we be doing this at all? Cluster sampling was developed for studying vaccination; it has never been validated for mortality. Because of the wide variance in the estimates it produces, some researchers are now questioning its usefulness.

Yet though its compromises made it particularly unreliable, the *Lancet* study remains the most widely known. Its conclusions were the earliest and most shocking of the scientific estimates and thus generated enormous media attention. The more-careful counts that followed prompted fewer, and less prominent, articles. There's little doubt that the larger number will live on for years in the writings of antiwar activists. But the rest of us, too, were influenced by it, perhaps more than we realize. We will have to live with its legacy.

Most data create what cognitive scientists call "anchoring effects": we fixate on numbers we've heard, even if they're arbitrary or wrong. In one 1970s experiment, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (whose work won a Nobel Prize) famously picked a number at random in front of their subjects, by spinning a wheel, and then asked them to guess whether the percentage of African nations in the UN was higher or lower than that number. Next, they asked for a hard estimate of the actual percentage. The higher the random number, the higher the final estimate tended to be, even though the first number had been obviously irrelevant.

These effects persist, infecting our related views, even when the "facts" are subsequently discredited. In one study, for example, experimenters gave students false, negative information about a teacher, but then told them it was incorrect. Nonetheless, when subsequently asked to evaluate that teacher, the students generally turned in worse ratings than did students in a control group that had not heard the bogus information.

We anchor most strongly on the first number we hear, particularly when it is shocking and precise—like, say, 601,027

violent deaths in Iraq. And even when such a number is presented only as a central estimate in a wide range of statistical possibilities (as the *Lancet* study's figure was), we tend to ignore the range, focusing instead on the lovely, hard number in the middle. Human beings are terrible at dealing with uncertainty, and besides, headlines seldom highlight margins of error.

When information supports positions we already hold, we of course tend to accept it less critically; when the opposite is true, we can be quite good at shutting the information out. "Motivated reasoning" is a mighty force, as anyone who has argued politics in a bar at 2 a.m. can attest. Scientists have observed the process, using a functional MRI machine to peer into the brain while it processes political statements, and their report is unsurprising. When we are assessing neutral statements, activity is concentrated in the areas that control higher reasoning. But when we process statements with political valence, suddenly our emotional cortices light up as well. Indeed, some research indicates that the emotion precedes, and governs, the higher cognition—that logic is, literally, an afterthought.

But cognitive bias is not limited to partisans; we all anchor on the numbers we hear. The *Lancet* article's central estimate exerts a gravitational pull on even its harshest critics, who seem to be mentally benchmarking their estimates by how much they differ from that 601,027. Others who are not motivated to disprove that number tend to orbit even closer.

Once people make an estimate, they have a strong tendency to confirm it. If I ask you whether it is plausible that there are 600,000 Canada geese in Chicago, your thought process might go something like this: *Big lake ... a lot of parks ... very near Canada ... OK, sure.* Once you've said yes to that 600,000 figure, psychological studies show, you'll continue "recruiting evidence" for it, perhaps noticing an article on a goose refuge near the city. Eventually you'll wind up surrounded by a little army of facts that support the theory. What most people don't do is look for ways to falsify it: *Shouldn't the geese still be in Florida at this time of year?*

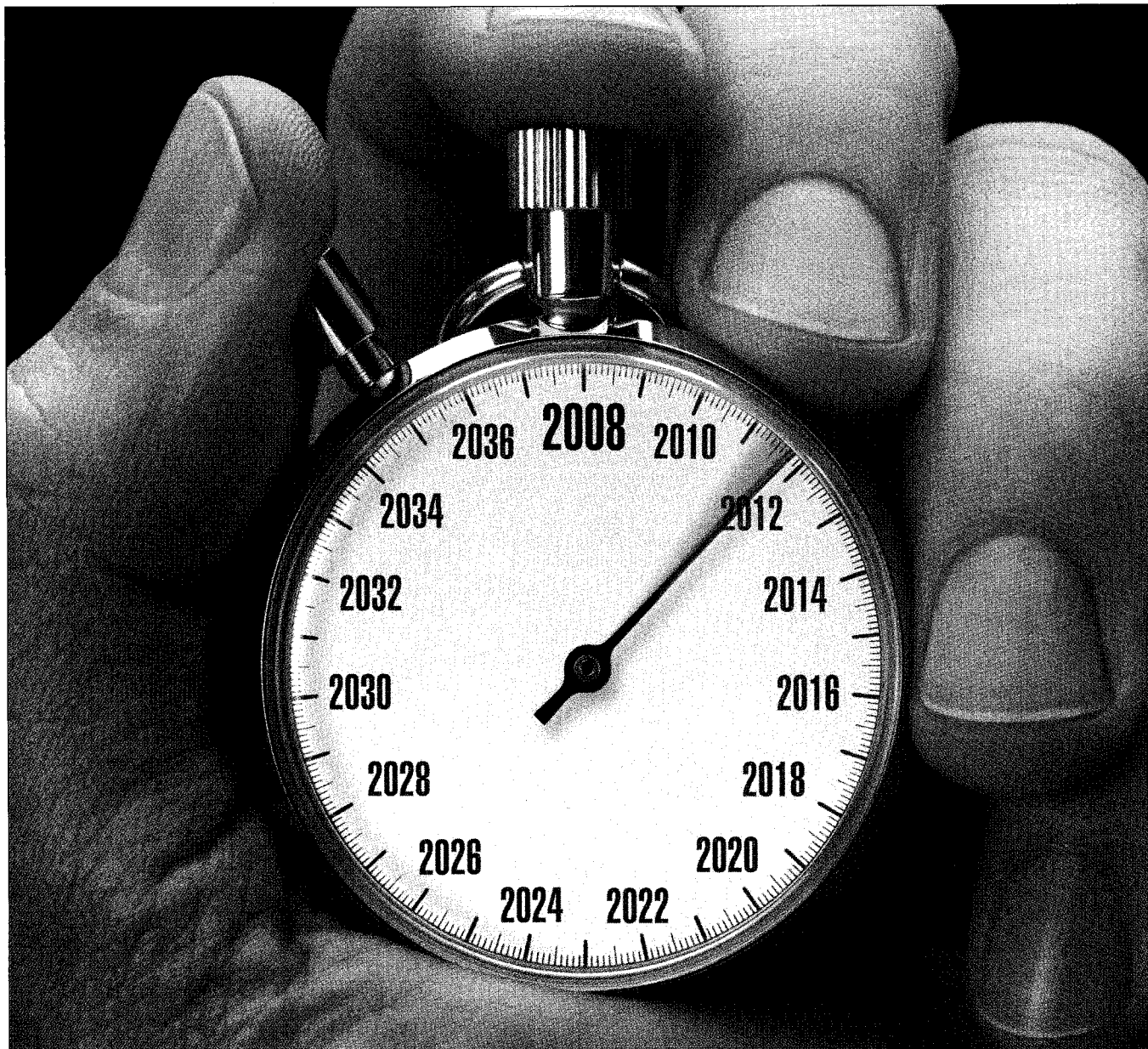
This psychological quirk can create motivated reasoning even in an initially disinterested observer. By the time we've finished affirming the figure's plausibility, it has become ours, and we'll fight to defend it. Being challenged—say, arguing with a skeptical friend—now makes us dig in. Once mustered, the troops are hard to disperse.

All of this calls into question the idea that even a flawed study is better than no study. Like most people, I believe that more information is usually better; when facts or theories conflict, air the differences and let the facts fight it out. But not every number is a fact. And when the data fall below some threshold of quality, it's better to have no numbers at all.

When researchers try to collect data in the heat of conflict, the necessary compromises make shocking outliers more likely. Yet early, messy studies are first to press, so the worse the data, the more likely we are to hear about it. Even when bad numbers are overthrown, the correction often comes too late. Appallingly high and, it turns out, inaccurate estimates of deaths resulting from sanctions were among the reasons advanced for invading Iraq. And ultimately, inflated early estimates of casualties can trivialize the very problem they were meant to highlight. When the initial estimates of 250,000 dead in the former Yugoslavia were revised downward, one conflict researcher complains, suddenly the number became "only" 100,000.

Witness the Johns Hopkins team's critics, who triumphantly waved the WHO results at their opponents. But even if "only" 150,000 people have been killed by violence in Iraq, that's a damn high price. Conversely, few of the study's supporters expressed much pleasure at the news that an extra 450,000 people might be walking around in Iraq. After a year and a half of bitter argument, all that anyone seemed interested in was proving they had been right. In counting, we somehow lost track of the mountain of dead bodies piling up beneath our numbers. ▀

Megan McArdle, an *Atlantic* associate editor, blogs at meganmcardle.theatlantic.com.



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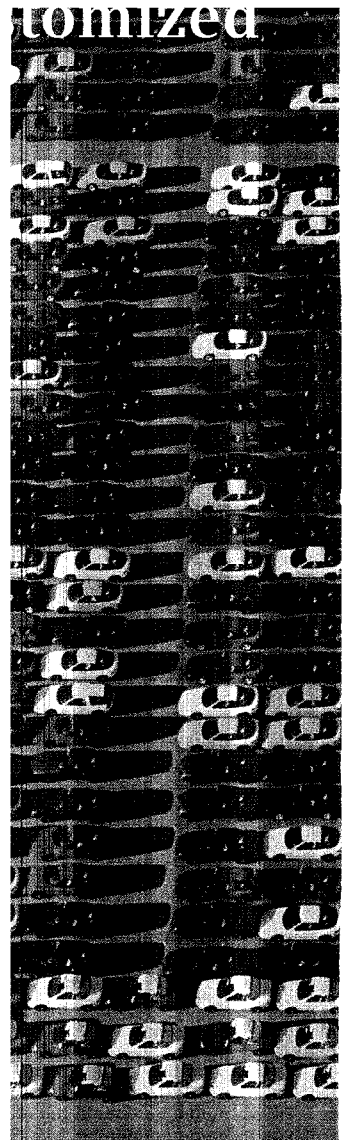
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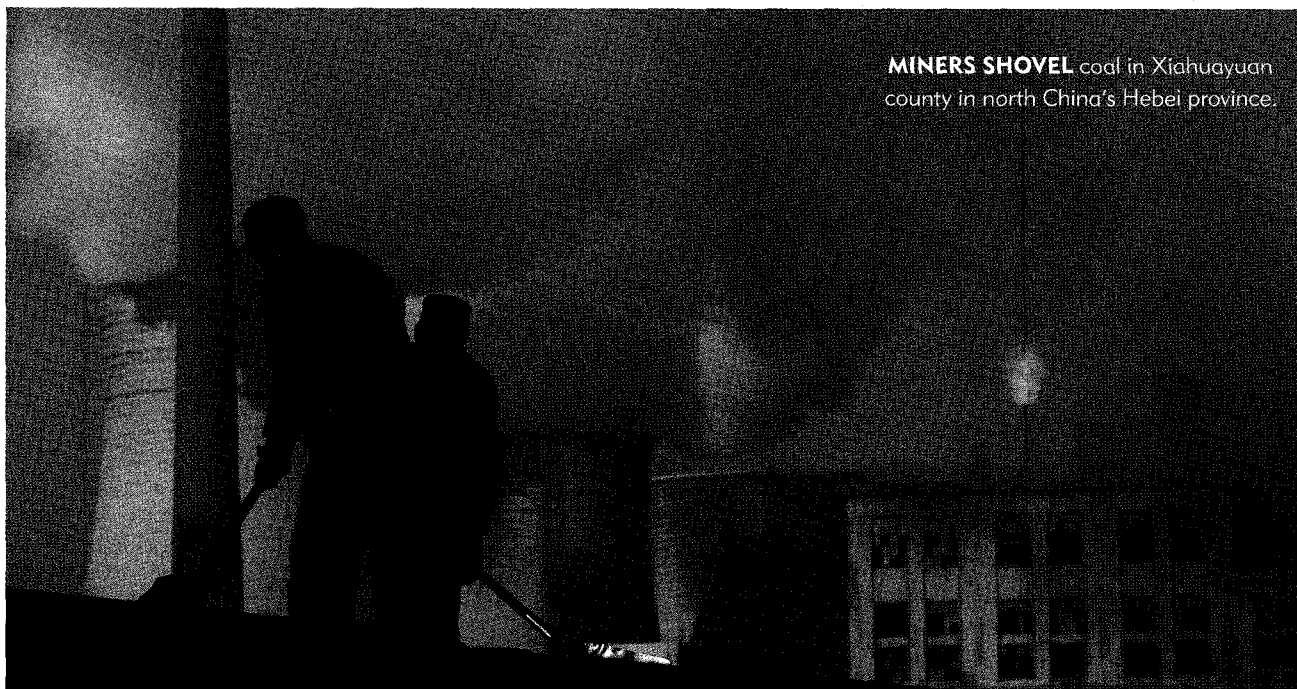


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MINERS SHOVEL coal in Xiahuayuan county in north China's Hebei province.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

Kyoto was a sham and a failure—so how has it become a model for future anti-warming efforts?

Sins of Emission

BY CLIVE CROOK

Seven years into the administration of George W. Bush—what some critics have taken to calling “the reign of error”—it has become almost irresistibly tempting for many Americans, and even more foreigners, to reflexively mistrust whatever the president advocates, and to favor whatever he stands against. As his days in office wind down, it's looking more and more as if Bush might have been a uniter after all.

Even in this environment, one must look upon the political rehabilitation of the Kyoto Protocol—a misbegotten concept and an abject failure in practice—as a signal achievement of this administration. Early on, even Kyoto's champions saw large flaws. Al Gore, speaking for the administration that signed the deal in 1998, said then that the agreement should not go to the Senate for ratification “until

key developing nations participate in this effort ... This is a global problem that will require a global solution.” But many of those countries (China among them) never did participate meaningfully—and the Senate had effectively scuttled the pact anyway the year before, by a vote of 95–0.

The lopsidedness of the vote was not surprising; the burden that Kyoto would have placed on the country was politically indefensible. According to a calculation by the Yale economist William Nordhaus, the original protocol yielded negligible benefits for the United States, at a cost of more than \$5 trillion. Europe faced net costs, too, but only about one-fifth as large. As seen from Europe, this bargain may have been more about punishing America for its energy-squandering way of life than about curbing global emissions of greenhouse gases.

Yet beginning in 2001, by opposing the agreement so obtusely, by offering no plausible alternative, and by denying for so long that climate change was even a significant problem, the Bush administration began to shield Kyoto from criticism and to energize its supporters. Bathed in the glow of Bush's disdain, an enterprise that was doomed from the start came to look like a thwarted triumph. By 2003, after the president had killed any prospect of American involvement, more than 90 percent of Americans were telling pollsters that they had heard of global warming; 88 percent, lacking any other tangible alternative, supported the protocol as a way to reduce warming's impact. International talks are now under way to negotiate a new climate-change treaty. Once this administration has departed, it is widely

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believed, the world can build on the success that might have been.

In fact, the best chance of progress is to see Kyoto as the disaster that it was. Its impact on greenhouse-gas concentrations has so far been minimal, and not just because the United States stood aside. With every other rich country signed on, the decades-old upward trend in emissions has not slowed. Japan and Canada are hopelessly above their quotas. In western Europe, only three countries are now on pace to hit theirs. With time running out, others say that they will make the necessary policy changes by 2012, when Kyoto expires—but then, it's easy to say that.

Why has Kyoto been so ineffective? Because of disputes over fairness, which caused the United States and the big developing countries to opt out. Because of a lack of enforceability. And, at the root of it all, because of its fathomless complexity. The agreement required country-by-country targets for emissions, which were difficult to negotiate. What factors, it was asked, should be considered in selecting each country's targets? Current efficiency of energy use? Demographic projections? The pattern of industry? Different nations, as one might imagine, favored different approaches, based on self-interest. In the end, targets were all over the map, and in some cases difficult to defend objectively: Australia was allowed an 8 percent increase in emissions over 1990 levels, for instance, while Canada was required to reduce emissions by 6 percent. Needless to say, this process did not go smoothly.

Then, after all that negotiation, circumstances changed (economies grew or shrank; energy-intensive industries waxed or waned), making it easy for some countries (like the former Soviet satellites) to meet or surpass their targets, while others (such as Canada) found it difficult or impossible. The result: some countries didn't need to change their polluting practices at all; the rest had all manner of excuses for doing nothing.

Carving all of Kyoto's targets (as well as a raft of other provisions intended to

give the protocol some flexibility) into the granite of a global treaty was a gigantic undertaking. The product of all this effort has been many wasted years.

Tragically, the world looks poised to repeat this same cycle. The climate-change negotiations in Bali, Indonesia, at the end of last year pointed to a new treaty that preserves the defects of the old one. The aim, once more, is "binding" country-by-country targets for emissions, with rich nations doing the heavy lifting. This is precisely the failed Kyoto approach. Many of the officials at the negotiations booed and hissed at the U.S. representative until the Americans agreed to further talks about how this approach might be implemented.

change, or as countries leave or join. And no need to delay action until a monstrous new international treaty has every disputed detail nailed down.

The simplest way to raise the price of carbon is to tax it at so much per ton. (Yale's Nordhaus, for example, has proposed a carbon tax starting at around \$30 a ton and rising over time; that translates to a modest initial tax of 10 cents on a gallon of gasoline. Other economists recommend a tax many times larger.) Many U.S. politicians see a carbon tax as electoral poison, regardless of the new mood on climate change. Maybe they're right—but political resistance to an explicit tax need not block this approach. One could simply link the carbon tax to an

Bathed in the glow of Bush's disdain, an enterprise that was doomed from the start came to look like a thwarted triumph.

International action on global warming is called for. The best way forward is to switch from a tightly managed global regime based on quotas of carbon emissions to a more loosely coordinated system based on the price of carbon. To curb greenhouse-gas emissions, carbon-based energy has to get more expensive, whether you directly limit the amount emitted, or raise the price that emitters pay for the privilege. Steering the price and letting the market set quantities, rather than the other way around, has many economic advantages. But the best reason for doing it this way is geopolitical: it would make it easier for governments to act in concert and would give them less cover for shirking their responsibilities.

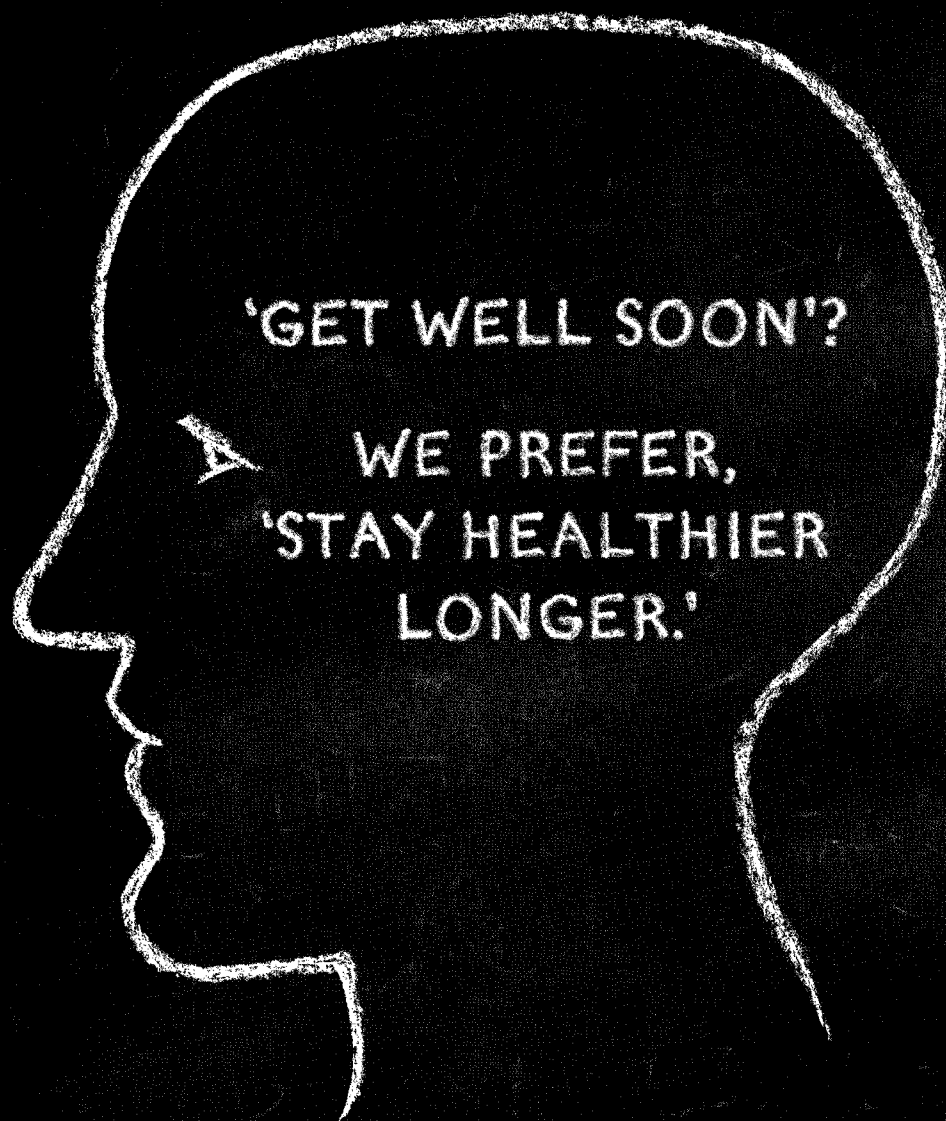
Instead of having to agree at the outset on long-range quantity targets—and the myriad arrangements needed to implement them—governments would strive to converge over time on just one number: the price of carbon. No need to set a baseline for emissions, or fixed long-term targets. No need to punish or reward countries for their earlier policies. No need to rewrite the treaty as circumstances

equivalent cut in some other tax. Alternatively, systems that disguise carbon taxes from the public are easy to devise, and the details could be left to individual countries. For instance, a modified cap-and-trade system (with additional permits for sale at a fixed price) could mimic the carbon-curbing effects of a tax.

Aid from rich countries to poor to support the transfer of carbon-saving technology, a key sticking point in the Kyoto negotiations, would still be desirable. But that question could be disentangled from the basic agreement, and settled separately. The main multilateral push could focus on finding a common tax rate, and in the meantime, each country could move ahead on its own. The carbon tax would be a simple and transparent measure of each country's effort to address global warming, and a focus for international persuasion.

The United States can still lead on this issue. If it does, perhaps we can get on with doing something useful about global warming—and bury the Kyoto approach once and for all. ■

Clive Crook is an *Atlantic* senior editor.



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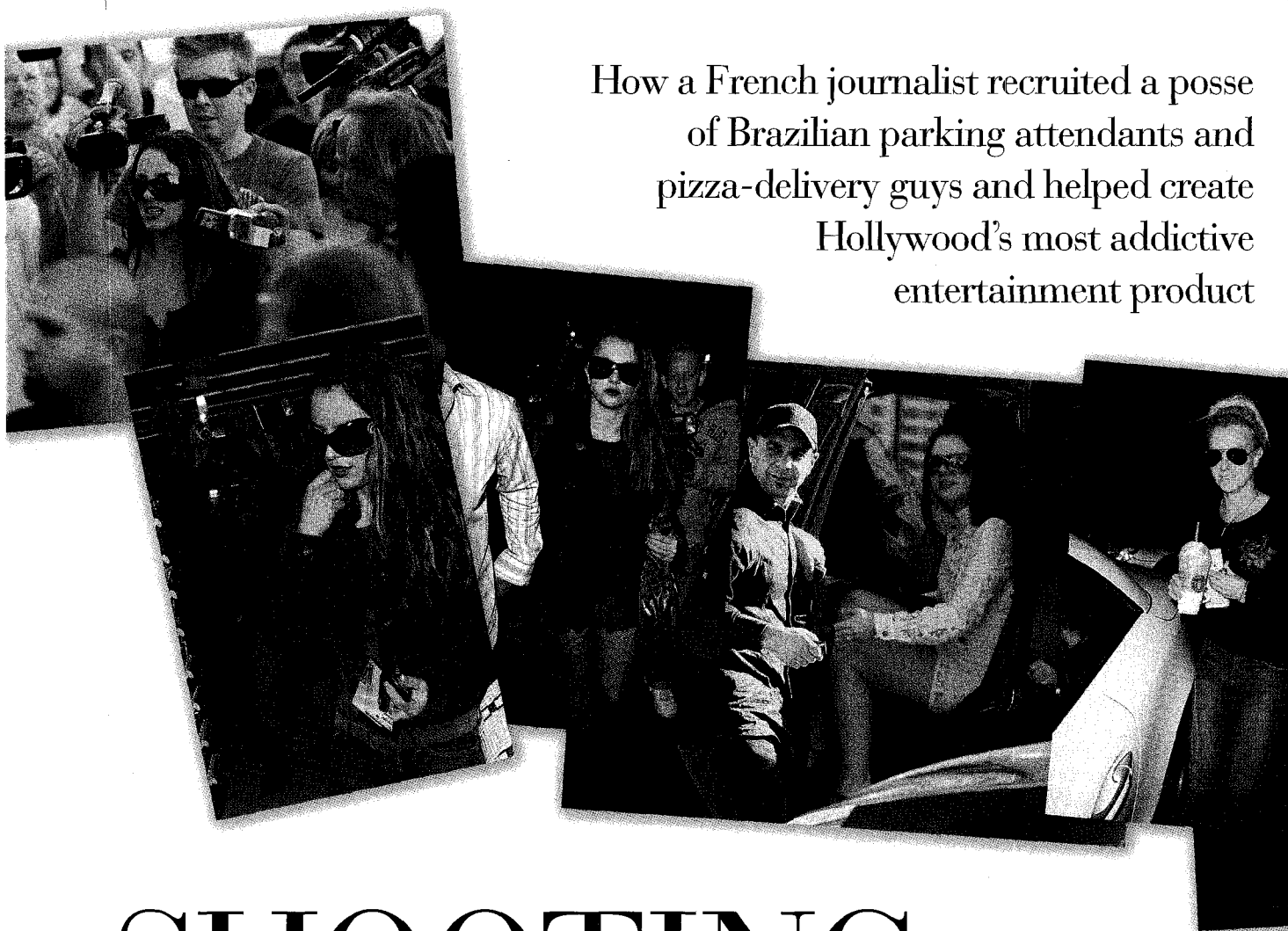
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How a French journalist recruited a posse
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SHOOTING BRITNEY

BY DAVID SAMUELS

“Britney Spears beat up my truck, bald-headed and everything,” Dano tells me as we lurk on the Valley side of Mulholland Drive in his silver Ford Explorer, which became famous when the out-of-control pop star attacked it with an umbrella. The night is darker than usual, owing to smoke from over a dozen wildfires that are burning as close as Malibu and around Lake Arrowhead. The air is »

so bad that several paparazzi have gone home sick. We are waiting for a white two-seater Mercedes SL65, Britney's turbo-powered sports car, or the black Audi driven by her friend Sam Lufti.

Between 30 and 45 paparazzi work Britney on any given night. The expensive cars they drive reflect the fact that Britney Spears—her marriages, custody battles, fights with her mom, new boyfriends, Starbucks runs, trips to the hospital—is a bigger and more lucrative story than Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton or John Lennon and Yoko Ono. History's best-publicized celebrity meltdown has helped fuel dozens of television shows, magazines, and Internet sites, the combined value of whose Britney-related product easily

by hiring gangs of immigrant kids with digital cameras purchased on credit from Best Buy to do the work of the heroic lone photographers who once lay in wait with telephoto lenses, stalking Jackie O.

Most of X17's paps, who number between 60 and 70, depending on the day and who quits or gets fired, are paid a stipend of \$800 to \$3,000 a week plus the occasional four- or low-five-figure bonus in exchange for global rights to their images, which Regis owns lock, stock, and barrel. X17 also pays weekly stipends to a dozen dedicated tipsters and occasional fees to 500 or 600 parking-lot attendants, club kids, and shop girls in and around L.A. X17 licenses its pictures to celebrity skin magazines like *Us Weekly*, *People*, *Life & Style*, and *In Touch* and their associated Web sites; to celebrity-oriented television programs like *Entertainment Tonight*, *Access Hollywood*, *Inside Edition*, and *Extra*; as well as to newspapers and magazines in England, Australia,

Germany, Japan, Hong Kong, mainland China,



exceeds \$100 million a year, and helped make *Britney Spears* the most popular search term on Yahoo once again in 2007, as it has been for six of the past seven years.

Dano, a sweet-faced but cynical Angeleno of Mexican extraction, has been part of the Britney show for three years. His employer, X17, is the biggest agency in the Hollywood paparazzi business. Nearly every famous picture of the world's most famous imploding pop star—Britney driving with her son on her lap, Britney in rehab, Britney without underwear, Britney shaving her head—was taken by X17's "shooters," or "paps," who work in teams under the direction of X17's owner, François Navarre, a graduate of the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, who moved to Los Angeles in 1992 and covered the L.A. riots for *Le Monde* before embracing his destiny as a freelance celebrity photographer. Navarre operates under his middle name, Regis. He is roundly despised by more traditional Hollywood paparazzi, who accuse him of having destroyed their highly individualistic business

Israel, Dubai, and dozens of other countries; to major television news networks like CNN, ABC, NBC, and CBS, and nearly everyone else in the media business who needs pictures and video clips of Paris Hilton's arrest or Brad and Angelina's kids or Britney's latest courtroom drama, which is to say nearly every major news outlet on the planet.

"We would normally spot her coming down towards Beverly Hills, past where Jessica Simpson lives," Dano explains, rubbing his palms on his navy Adidas tracksuit. "This is really old-school."

The main X17 team working on Britney these days is MBF, a secretive group of eight Brazilians plus floaters like Dano. Tonight the team leader, Felix Filho, has decided to try to lure the pop star outside by pulling his photographers from their usual curbside spots above

and below the Summit, the gated community at the top of Mulholland Drive where she lives. The practice of sitting right outside the entrance to a star's house is known as "door-stepping," and it takes its toll on paparazzi and their subjects alike. The potential upside of waiting 12 or 14 hours a day, six or seven days a week, is the chance that one day Britney will roll her car into a ditch, or be taken away again strapped to a gurney. "You're telling a little story in a 15- or 20-second clip," Dano explains, resting his right hand on his Panasonic DVX 100B three-chip broadcast-quality video camera. "You need an establishing shot. You need an action. And then you need it to resolve."

The evolution of Hollywood paparazzi from a marginal nuisance to one of the most powerful and lucrative forces driving the American news-gathering industry is a phenomenon that dates back to March 2002, when a women's magazine editor named Bonnie Fuller took over a Wenner Media property called *Us Weekly*, which had drifted along since its founding in 1977 as a rival to the fantastically successful *People* magazine franchise. What Fuller brought to *Us* was a keen understanding of her audience. "Every day, we'd look at tons of pictures that came in and lay them all out on a conference table," Fuller remembers. "And what was interesting to me was to look at celebrities going to the dry cleaners and pumping gas. I loved looking at these pictures of celebrities who were just like us."

Fuller's trademark front-of-the-book photo-feature, "Stars—They're Just Like US," created a lucrative new market for Hollywood paparazzi, whose output had formerly been limited to tabloids like the *National Enquirer* and the *Star*. It was not unusual in the Fuller years for a set of high-quality snapshots to rake in \$100,000 or more in secretive bidding wars that began on Thursday night and ended Monday evening, when *Us* and *People* were put to bed. Insiders could keep score by looking at the small-print photo credits in *Us*, *People*, *In Touch*, *InStyle*, and half a dozen or so newly minted competitors to see which of the paps hit the jackpot that week. It could be Bauer-Griffin, the union of the British rock-and-roll photographer Frank Griffin with the ex-New Yorker Randy Bauer; the daredevils at INF or the British expats at *Splash* and *Fame*; Eric Charbonneau and Kevin Mazur at WireImage; Alex Berliner, who for years had a lock on *Vanity Fair*'s Oscar party at Morton's; the infamous Louie De Filippis of LDP Images; Phil Ramey, the legendary old-school hack who ruled Page Six and caught Johnny Carson stepping out on his wife with Sally Field; or three unknowns who got lucky that week and snapped a celebrity hottie with her new boyfriend or someone else's spouse.

The genius of Bonnie Fuller's new approach was that almost any picture of a celebrity doing something ordi-

nary would do, with a little help from an inventive caption writer who could come up with a snappy one-liner like "Who Wore It Best?" (three happy stars wearing the same outfit) or "Can-Do Couples" (three couples smiling) for a quickie photo-feature to accompany newsier fare like "Angelina's Web of Lies." It was easy to imagine legions of Internet-era Andrew Marvells staying up late in fluorescent-lit cubicles appending metaphysical exclamation points to celebrity photo captions that would rocket readers ever closer to the celestial objects of their desire:

They Buy Bottled Water!

They Pick Up Presents! They Love to Buy Handbags!

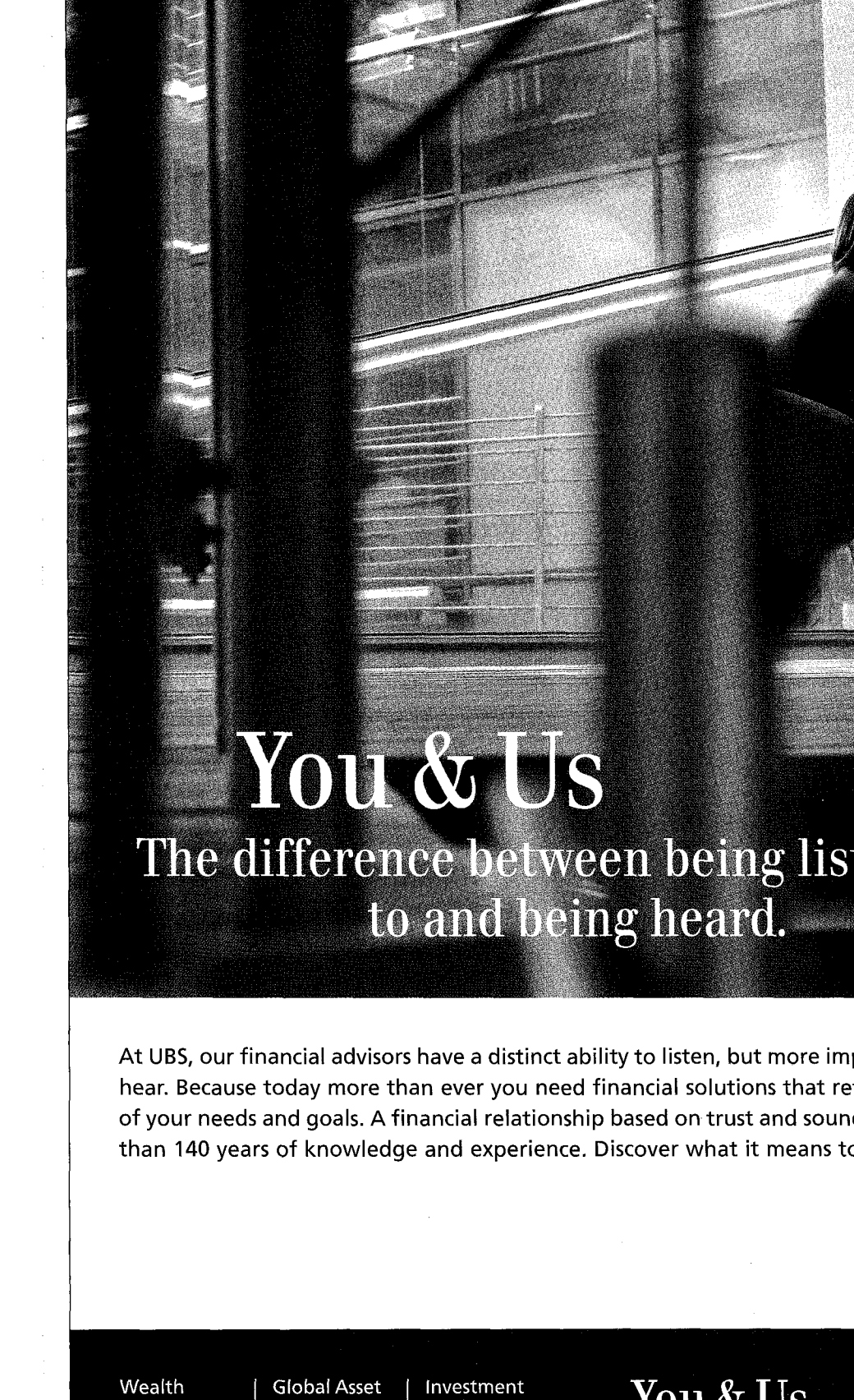
They Fix Flat Tires!

They Can't Get Their Straws in Cans!

The front-of-the-book snapshots in *People* and *Us* cost \$50,000 to \$75,000 per issue, to say nothing of the attention-grabbing exclusive photo-features on Brad and Jen's divorce or the latest *Friends* wedding, which averaged in the low-to-mid six figures. When the spending became impossible to sustain, the magazines slashed their photo budgets and stopped buying exclusives. The larger photo agencies like X17 and Bauer-Griffin then found that they could make even more money by selling a single set of pictures 15 or 20 times over, to eight or 10 magazines, five or six television programs, and Web sites. And so the industrial phase of paparazzi production was born. (X17 estimates its take from the sale of Britney-related images last year at \$3 million, or 25 percent of the company's gross revenues from the sale of celebrity photos and videos.)

The result of this happy convergence, the 24/7 Britney-ParisNicoleLindsayLohanMaybeDidCokeBradandAngelinaSavetheWorldOneChildataTimeBradandJenBenandJenPoorKatieHolmesMarriedTomCruiseWhoIsanAlien Celebrity Reality Show, was a distinctive new kind of participatory media experience resulting from the cold fusion of the old-school paparazzi business with the new wave of celebrity magazines and Internet sites. The proximate models for this new celebrity infotainment were the artfully staged "reality shows," like *The Real World* or *The Bachelor* or *I Love New York*, that have taken over the channel-clicking space once occupied by music videos and sitcoms. Where reality television was most often a highly edited and stylized version of an artificial ecosystem inhabited by good-looking pharmaceutical sales reps and tattooed baristas, the new reality shows did not require the active and willing participation of their central characters. The online communities that formed around news-driven celebrity dramas fed the buzz that drove the sales of the magazines and the ratings of the television programs that paid the paparazzi.

Where old media imposed a polite and deadening spectatorial distance between the reader and the medium



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to buttress the authority of the message handed down from on high, the online convergence of instant images and dramatic story lines encouraged the idea that the news was filter-free and that readers were part of the story. Online communities became gladiatorial forums where pseudonymous participants sallied forth to trade insults and shred the toilet-paper-thin reputations built by studio publicists and New York magazine editors with a vulgar and highly sexualized avidity that recalls the frenzied mob scene at the end of Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*.

The brightest star on the world's newest stage won her first professional role acting in the off-Broadway comedy *Ruthless!* at the age of 9, after her mother moved her from Kentwood, Louisiana, to Manhattan. Britney was enrolled at the Professional Performing Arts School, where Lynne Spears struck the fledgling school's administrators as the very model of an obsessive stage mom. Her daughter impressed everyone she met early on with her fabulous work ethic, which landed her a spot on *The All New Mickey Mouse Club* at age 11 with future

message-board experts, *Us Weekly*, and E!, the star's outlandish attention-seeking behavior helped drive the celebrity skin trade like no other story, and produced dozens of often unappetizing and iconic pictures. Together, these images constitute a very public and oddly intimate deconstruction of the persona that the singer and her surrounding machinery had created.

Of all the highly intrusive pictures that have made Britney Spears the reigning goddess of poor life choices and bad parenting, it is impossible to ignore the surpassing weirdness of the image of the world's biggest pop star seated in front of a mirror in a Ventura Boulevard hair salon on February 16, 2007, electric razor in hand, looking blindly at the camera while shaving off all her hair. Her look was at once vulnerable and wildly alienated, the expression one might expect to see on the face of a young cult member who had just set fire to her birth certificate on the sidewalk. Subsequent shots in the series showed the star smiling and making faces in the mirror as she tried and failed to convince herself of the virtues of her radical new haircut.

'Hi, Britney,' I say. She looks at me and smiles brightly.
'Hi,' she says. 'Happy Thanksgiving.'

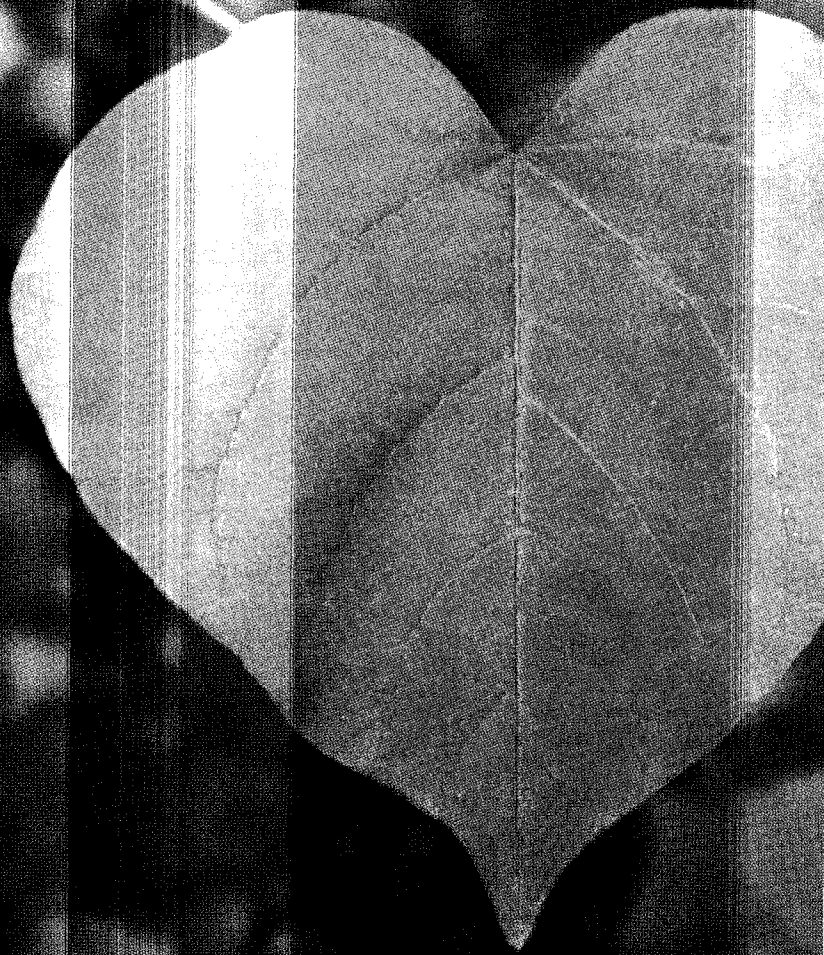
pop stars Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake, and future actor Ryan Gosling. "You had to sing and you had to dance ... and it was every night," she later recalled of her career as a teenage pop star. "I kinda got tired."

At 17, she was shot for the cover of *Rolling Stone* by David LaChapelle with her bra and panties showing to promote "... Baby One More Time," the breakout single that made her a star. Five years later, on January 3, 2004, after releasing the platinum-selling albums *Oops! ... I Did It Again*, *Britney*, and *In the Zone*, and signing a multi-million-dollar endorsement deal with Pepsi, she married a childhood friend, Jason Alexander, at the Little White Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas. Her handlers portrayed the marriage as a prank, and it was annulled. On October 6, 2004, she married Kevin Federline, a fecund chorus boy, and a year later she gave birth to their first child, Sean Preston Federline. A year after that, on September 12, 2006, she gave birth to a second son, Jayden James. Less than two months later, she filed for divorce. As her public behavior became more erratic, it was reported that Spears's father was an alcoholic and that her grandmother committed suicide by shooting herself in the chest with a 12-gauge shotgun on her infant son's grave.

For a host of reasons (Britney's days as a Mouseketeer, her failures as a parent) feverishly speculated upon by

It is hard to overstate the impact of these photos on the Britney story. With their worldwide publication, Britney Spears departed the planet of normal bubblegum celebrity story lines and entered the heavenly realm of pop myth. America's sweetheart had dramatically and publicly unedited herself, removing the customary trappings and protections of celebrity to reveal the damaged psyche of a fractured person who was no longer able or willing to regulate her public behavior. "It was completely arresting," remembered Bonnie Fuller, who left *Us* in 2003 to become the editorial director of American Media, which publishes the *Star*. "You don't expect to see a celebrity, especially a celebrity known for their beauty, poise, and glamour, shaving their head in public and clearly in need of some kind of help." After that day, it became nearly impossible to find exclusive shots of Britney Spears, because there were so many shooters. When exclusives did come along, no one could afford them.

The Nextel walkie-talkie on the dashboard crackles. "Where are you?" asks Felix. "We could put somebody by Beverly Glen," Dano answers, "but you never know with Britney." The heavy pall of smoke from the wildfires is everywhere, making the evening stakeout particularly unpleasant. Dano leans back in the



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AN AMERICAN RE

darkened interior of his plush SUV, keeping an eye on the road in the hope of spotting the star's white Mercedes. "You became famous because of the people who buy your albums or pay to go to your movies," he says. "Now those people want to know about you. Who's your girlfriend? What's your favorite kind of shoes?"

Some stars hate the paparazzi. Others use them to reinvent themselves or increase their fame. Working with the paparazzi to create memorable shots is called "giving it up," a sexualized metaphor that neatly captures the masculine-feminine romantic dynamic of need and reluctance that characterizes the relationship between celebrity photographers and their subjects. Paris Hilton is the Queen of Giving It Up, Dano says. "She creates the beautiful shots that we need. She is the one who wants it." Another favorite is Lindsay Lohan. "Lindsay's OK, but she's kind of strange, because she can be high, or in a weird mood," he says. His least favorite subjects are surly male stars like Leonardo di Caprio, Ben Affleck, Justin Timberlake, and Tom Cruise. "Jessica Simpson, she's really sweet, she'll give it up. Gwen Stefani is nice. She'll give it up." But no one in the business compares to Britney.

When I ask Dano if he is bored with talking about the umbrella attack, he says that he has never spoken about it to the press before. The X17 guys had followed Britney to Kevin's house, but he wouldn't buzz her in. "She wanted to see her kids," Dano says. "We came out and took pictures." Then Spears and her long-time friend Alli drove around the corner to a Jiffy Lube, where Alli opened her door and asked the photographers to please leave them alone. Britney stuck her head out of the car, too. "She took her hat off, and she was bald," Dano says, of the moment that made him the most celebrated photographer in America that week. "She was breathing like a bull. It was like smoke was coming out of her nostrils. Then she leaps out of the door, screaming 'Motherfuckers!'"

Paparazzi prefer to work in a triangle, with the celebrity at the center and a shooter on three sides. That way, when they turn away from one camera, they are facing another, and when they turn away again, they are facing the third shooter. As Dano retreated from the enraged star, two flanking X17 photographers took stills while Dano shot video. When the umbrella-attack video went viral, Dano put his Ford Explorer on eBay. Bidding went over \$30,000 before he took the car off the market. Stills and videos of the incident sold for nearly \$400,000.

X17 has an office in Beverly Hills, but Regis prefers to work at home in an old T-shirt and shorts, just as he did as a lone paparazzo. Now he owns a \$5 million house in Pacific Palisades, where his neighbor is the actor Adam Sandler. On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, at 7:45 a.m., he has already been up for an hour and a half reading the news and reviewing last night's pictures. The

best shots of the evening are of the very pregnant singer Christina Aguilera by a team called VWR, a designation made up from the initials of the team's key members. "She's holding her stomach. It's quite heavy," he says approvingly.

Next up are exclusives of Jessica Simpson at a bar in Los Feliz. "The story of the girl is that she's single, so here she is in a bar," he explains, seated in front of a computer screen with a cup of coffee. With his tousled hair and brown doe eyes, Regis, who recently turned 45, looks like the *beau idéal* of the modern French husband. The images will sell, but not for more than a few thousand dollars, he says. "She's not dressed, and she is with her hairdresser, who is gay." As he finishes his selection, he posts high-quality versions of the best sets on X17's agency Web site, where they can be accessed by photo buyers and agents around the world but not by the general public. Low-quality versions of the most striking images are also posted on X17online.com, where they drive traffic and attract the attention of television producers and editors. Even if 50 photographers shoot the same star on the same night from different angles, Regis says, the photo buyers will mysteriously gravitate to the same shot.

Regis's wife, Brandy, is a blonde in her mid-30s who looks like the actress Michelle Pfeiffer. Brandy has a master's degree in broadcast journalism from USC and used to work for Reuters. Now she runs X17online. She is typing an e-mail:

Dear agents, PLEASE DO NOT post on your websites our recent exclusive shots of Britney Spears driving the toy car with her sons. DO NOT include them in your e-mail alerts. While we want to sell them, we do not want them intercepted by fan sites who will post them online.

The e-mail is signed "Kelly," a pseudonym left over from the days when François and Brandy imagined that they might wind up doing something more conventional.

Regis is talking on the phone to the team that will be staking out Brad Pitt. "When he goes to the studio, you have to watch all the exits," he explains. Brad Pitt is a master at playing games. One of his favorite tricks is to drive onto the Warner Bros. lot and leave the photographers guessing which of the studio's many exits he will choose for his departure. Adrien Davis, 5, and Remy Alaska, 3, imitate their father's French-accented English, then skitter off to the living room. Adrien pokes his head up over the back of the couch, peering first at Regis and then at Brandy through the telescopic sight on his plastic rifle.

As Regis instructs his team on the finer points of stalking the wily Pitt, he looks over a set of Paris Hilton photos taken at LAX. When he gets off the phone, he curls his upper lip in distaste.

"For me, she is slipping," he says. "She has an expression on her mouth that she didn't have before. She lost a little bit of something. I don't know if it will come back." Regis dates the decline to her recent arrest; since then, the Queen of Giving It Up has appeared chastened. In the shots, she is wearing a Japanese cartoon-print hoodie and talking on her cell phone, with a silver purse over her arm. "That's not enough, OK?," Regis says, drawing my eye to shots of Paris at a newsstand. "Before, she would have picked up a magazine or a big candy bar or some funny thing. She is just standing in the newsstand at the airport like anybody else."

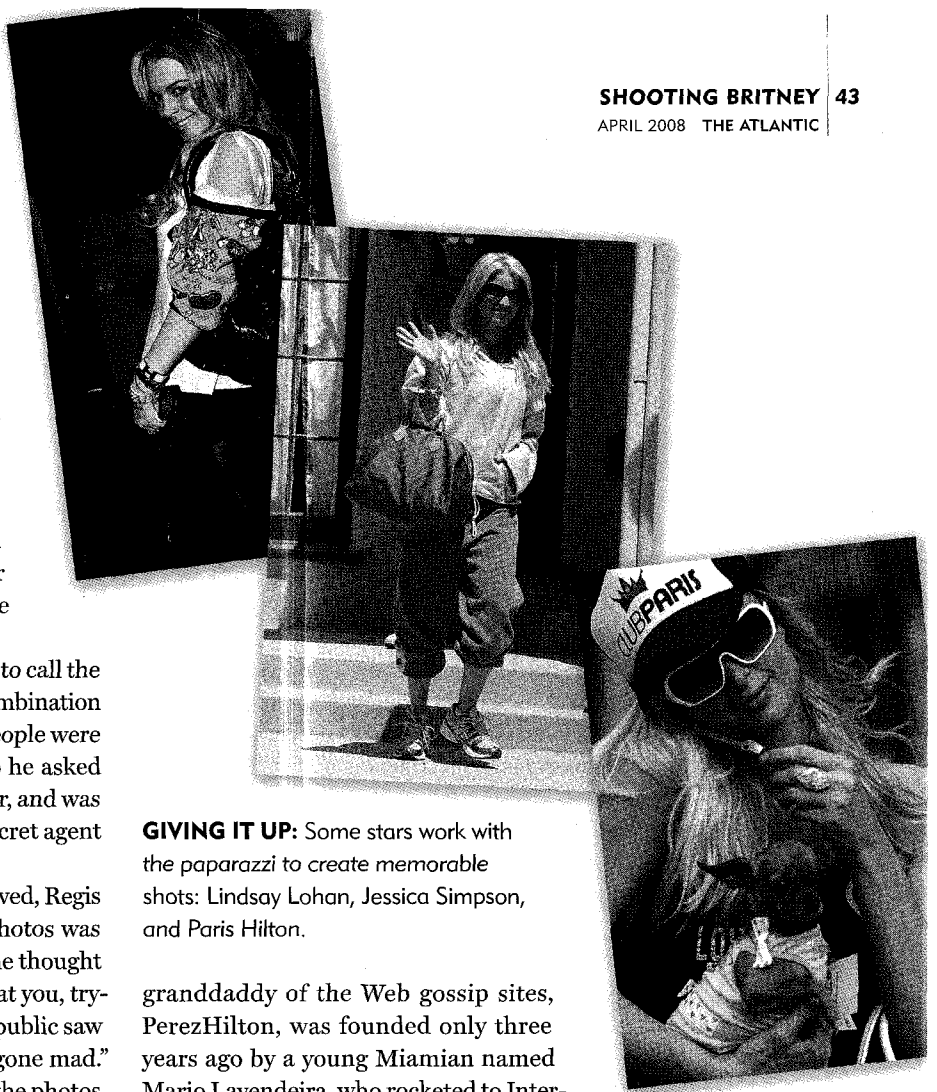
Regis started X17 in 1997. He had intended to call the company Photo-something, but nearly every combination with the word *photo* had been taken, and 30 people were in line behind him at the registrar's office. So he asked what letter in the alphabet was the least popular, and was told "X." The name "X17" reminded him of a secret agent from the Second World War, he says.

When the Britney shaved-head pictures arrived, Regis was about to go to bed. The intimacy of the photos was more disturbing to Brandy than to him. Still, he thought they were striking. "You feel as if she's looking at you, trying to tell you something," he says. "When the public saw our photos, they thought Britney Spears had gone mad." *Entertainment Tonight* bought the right to air the photos for one night for a sum rumored to be \$80,000.

Before Brandy and Regis left on vacation a week ago, her main source inside Britney's camp, the Svengali-like Lufti, was obsessively text-messaging her. Now he returns her texts two or three days late. "I don't know if that vacation weaned him off of me," Brandy says. When Regis comes back downstairs after getting dressed, Brandy inspects him critically. "You are missing a belt loop in back," she says. Regis adjusts his belt, and they head out together to the office.

Regis pilots his Porsche Cayenne down the hill, a sweater looped over his shoulders, his cell phone held daintily up to his ear between forefinger and thumb. "So tonight they have family therapy of the entire family," he says, passing on his latest Lindsay Lohan tip to his team in New York. "He will be telling us where and when. We need video and stills. Shoot low light, but get something. You need a good camera, like the new Sony." The source of Regis's latest exclusive is the actress's father, Michael Lohan, a failed actor who is hoping to get a celebrity gossip show on the air.

X17ONLINE.COM
The intimate and terrifying world of celebrity gossip sites like PerezHilton.com, TMZ.com, and X17online attracts much of its traffic during the corporate lunch hour, from women between the ages of 16 and 34. The



GIVING IT UP: Some stars work with the paparazzi to create memorable shots: Lindsay Lohan, Jessica Simpson, and Paris Hilton.

granddaddy of the Web gossip sites, PerezHilton, was founded only three years ago by a young Miamian named Mario Lavendeira, who rocketed to Internet fame by retailing celebrity gossip with bitchy comments scrawled in digital Magic Marker on photos he appropriated from X17 and other agencies by a variety of means, which informed sources say included gaining the passwords to newswires, photo-agency accounts, and the photo departments of major magazines.

What was most striking about Lavendeira's site was not the quality of the gossip but the way a few lines casually written on a celebrity snapshot and then expounded upon by a few hundred anonymous or pseudonymous commenters could tear down reputations that took millions of dollars to build up. In addition to costing the photo agencies a fortune in lost fees, Lavendeira exposed the traditional cozy alliance of star publicists and studio heads and their lapdogs in the magazine industry. Where Bonnie Fuller's "Stars—They're Just Like US" made celebrities seem normal (while suggesting that even their least significant daily activities were worthy of full-color glossy photo spreads), PerezHilton depicted movie stars as freaks and delighted in being nasty.

The success of PerezHilton led to the rise of the gossip site TMZ, which gained major media traction in 2006 when it published a police report with the details of Mel Gibson's DUI arrest. (TMZ stands for "30-mile zone," meaning the Greater Los Angeles area as defined by the

film and television production guilds.) The site is owned by the giant media conglomerate Time Warner and edited by a pixieish attorney and former TV producer named Harvey Levin. "It's old-fashioned journalism," Levin says of the way that celebrity Web sites gather news. He suggests that the kind of aggressive Web-based coverage that TMZ and other prominent sites have pioneered has obvious applications beyond the world of celebrity, in areas like politics and sports. "I see lots of opportunities," he says. TMZ originally paid X17 for most of the pictures and video footage featured on its site, a relationship that cooled considerably after X17 launched its own gossip site, X17online, a little over a year ago to compete directly with TMZ and PerezHilton.

Offering paparazzi photos accompanied by gossip items updated as many as 20 times a day, all three sites encourage visitors to become part of the story by defending their celebrity favorites, spewing bile, and attacking each other in obscene and frequently scatological terms whose proper interpretation often requires an anatomy textbook and a dictionary. In the dark sewer of misanthropic, gynophobic, and Rabelaisian epithets running through the comments section of celebrity blogs, one can also find gems of authentic emotional connection to celebrity foibles from readers who have suffered tragedies of their own, or been drunk, high, or on pills and up way past their normal bedtimes. A good number of readers seem to write in the openly delusional (yet not entirely impossible) belief that if their post is sincere or hateful enough, the walls separating their own lives from the lives of celebrities will dissolve, transporting them from the backlit world of their LCD screens to the superpollinated atmosphere of the media daisy chain.

The staff bloggers at the heart of X17online are USC film-school graduates who prefer to conceal their real names in order to preserve their future viability in the rapidly disintegrating Hollywood system. The house style is a kind of effervescent sugary sweetness that allows for wholesale insincerity without compromising the relationship between a given celebrity and X17's photographers. "We'll put up a picture that's so obviously negative," Brandy admits, "and we just write something so completely ignorant of the focus of the picture and let the commenters online take care of it." It is impossible for anyone who has spent even a modicum of time in the comments section of a celebrity blog to look at paparazzi pictures the same way:

I love these two pics of Britney

The first one really shows off how disgusting her skin is. And her new lips just make her look dirty or like she has a moustache. Too bad you can't also see the nasty individual greasy extensions to show what an unkempt slob she really is.

And in the second pic, she seems irritated with the paps. If she wasn't such a trainwreck, they wouldn't be following her around like they do.

An attention-grabbing picture can receive as many as 400 comments a day.

Regis and Brandy first met in Frank Sinatra's driveway, when they were both covering his funeral. "I rode around with him a lot to try to understand what he was doing," Brandy says of their early dates in the summer of 1998. At the time, she was living on the beach in Venice above Figtree's Cafe in a one-bedroom apartment on \$450 a week. When her roommate left, she moved in with Regis. "He'd be walking around the pool and he'd be making a sale, and it was \$800 or \$1,500 or sometimes \$2,000," she remembers. "And I was like, 'Oh my God, this is a dream life!' Although from the very beginning, I always hated the fact that he was on the phone and I could never finish a sentence without being interrupted by that ring. And he would never turn it off, and he would never really apologize for it."

Regis and Brandy seem to have an ideal marriage. They spend a lot of time together at home and both feel liberated by their work, though it does have its drawbacks. "You know," Brandy sighs, "I want to get my kids into the good private schools around here, and I don't want them to know what we do. But we probably won't get in, so it probably doesn't matter."

Regis drops Brandy off for a meeting at E! and we take a drive to Malibu. On the dashboard of the car is the monthly accounting of X17's sales to Germany, which amount to 40,000 euros. The largest sale is for 360 euros, confirming that this is a volume business. The biggest market for paparazzi photographs is the U.S., followed by the U.K. and Australia. Regis checks his phone again. In the last hour, he has received 36 voicemail messages from people asking for pictures. Acting as the guiding spirit and brain for 60-odd photographers means that Regis comes as close as he can to the paparazzo's dream of never missing a shot.

"Ubiquity, being everywhere, always, that's a dream," he says. "It's true that from the beginning, I have struggled with the fact that in this business, you are always at the mercy of the factor of chance. Eventually, I realized there was a way to solve this problem, if I let go of my ego." As photographs, most paparazzi pictures impress him as hopelessly banal, but he is not without a sense of purpose.

"I don't want to say anything, but in a way, X17 put three stars into rehab, if not in jail, this year," he says as we pull into the parking lot of the Malibu Country Mart. As we are talking, Shirley MacLaine materializes out of the fog, like a ghostly, withered apparition of celebrity

past. It takes Regis a moment to remember her name. "She is the actress from the '60s whose brother is a famous actor," he says. "She is the one who is seen when there is nothing to shoot in Malibu."

It's late in the afternoon and all the paps from Mulholland are hanging out by the entrance to the underground garage at the Four Seasons, waiting for Britney, a scene that has taken place at every hotel in Beverly Hills. "At first it was the Bel-Air, then it was the Peninsula, now it's the Four Seasons," says Felix Filho, the team leader of X17's top Britney-stalkers. Known in the business as "the Brazilians," the eight ranking members of MBF have logged over 40,000 man-hours watching Britney while taking perhaps \$6 million worth of often exclusive pictures. When Britney Spears fulfills her apparent fate and dies in a fiery car crash or overdoses on prescription medication, it will be surpassingly strange if MBF misses the shot.

Felix a camera, and Luiz taught him to shoot. Eventually, Denis started sending Felix, Luiz, and another Brazilian named Ismael Marchi out on assignments and selling the pictures to Regis while he stayed at home and smoked dope. The original three members of MBF (the first letters of their last names) stayed with Denis for three months before they went out on their own.

The only way to learn to be a celebrity photographer is to spend time out in the field. "You look at what they shoot and how they shoot it," Felix says as the lights twinkle through the haze in the valley below. "You find out how to be sneaky."

A dark-haired photographer in a silver Mercedes zooms by, parks by the side of the road, and idles for a while. He has been on Britney, on and off, for four years. His name is Adnan Ghalib. "He's the most cool guy in this job," Felix says. A few weeks earlier, Britney had picked Adnan, a handsome Afghan, out of the pack at a Quiznos and invited him to join her in the bathroom. It will soon be rumored,

The dividing line between the Britney story as it exists today, and Britney Spears as a normal star in the Hollywood galaxy, was the night she shaved her head.

Suddenly, a pair of headlights appears at the bottom of the ramp. The photographers start shooting, and then they run for their cars. Felix drives a new BMW truck. I jump inside, and as the pack swings up Coldwater Canyon at a scarily high speed, the other MBF drivers box out the competition so Felix can pull up alongside Britney and shoot video. The star is blasting a song from her new album, *Blackout*, through her open passenger-side window and singing along. She looks lost in her own world, a rich girl singing to herself in a white Mercedes. "Britney is unpredictable," Felix shouts, as he films her driving. "She might stop and take her clothes off, I don't know."

The Mercedes disappears inside the Summit and the photographers park their cars farther up Mulholland Drive, near Mischa Barton's mansion. "To be a pap, you have to be ready to do anything, legal or illegal," Felix says. He agrees to tell me the story of how the Brazilians came to dominate the trade in pictures of Britney Spears. Before he became a photographer, he says, he worked in valet parking and then as a delivery boy for Domino's, the pizza chain. One evening, he delivered a pizza to Denis Castro, a Brazilian photographer who worked for X17, who had a very serious case of the munchies. Denis was thrilled to find out that Felix was from his hometown of Porto Alegre. Because his license had been suspended, he had already hired another Brazilian from Porto Alegre named Luiz Betat to drive him around to his assignments. He gave

then confirmed, that they are having an affair. It's easy to see why Britney would choose Ghalib. He's good-looking and stylish, he knows everything about her already, and they have the same taste in cars.

The two-way radio crackles.

"Felix," the voice says. It's Luiz.

"Tell me," Felix says. The radio crackles again.

"A cop went into the Summit. I saw him go in. I saw him go in for sure. Maybe Britney overdosed."

The cops pull up, and the paps take off. When the cops are feeling mean, they will roust the paparazzi three or four times a night. We drive around in circles for 20 minutes, and Felix is glum. "My money is going down. I feel frustrated," he says.

In a *Los Angeles Times* article, Felix was identified as the shooter of the most famous Britney Spears photo of them all, the image of her shaving her head. "I was like, 'It's not real,'" he told the *Times*. "I freaked out, my legs were shaking." When he tells me the story, his details of the night are vague and rambling. The more time I spend with Felix, the more I believe that he took credit for someone else's picture. A great shot is almost never an accident. You need luck, skill, timing, good information, a sense of how to frame a shot, and the ability to make the right decisions under pressure. The margin for error is so small that the best paparazzi generally get the best shots. Felix's walkie-talkie beeps again.

"Yayo, what's going on? What's going on?" he says. When he gets off the phone, he shrugs. "I'm getting crazy, working this," he says. "I don't give a fuck, man."

The previous day, MBF got some shots of Britney in her car arriving at the Beverly Hills Hotel with a box of the prescription stimulant Provigil poking out of her handbag. It was Regis who noticed the box. "I didn't think that was a big deal, you know?" Felix says. With 35 photographers camped outside her house, and the voices of her lawyers and self-styled pimp-daddy ex-husband and monster stage mother all arguing for space in her head, it is easy to see how the pop star might look for outside support.

It is not uncommon for Britney to stay up late reading the X17 message boards, or so Sam Lufti told Brandy. The source of the pop star's fascination is not hard to locate:

She needs to secure her ass in the car with the seat-belt. Look how the belt is behind her. Fool.

Posted by: QueenOfTrashin

My tribute in the form of a haiku to the lovely and talented Miss Spears:

Radiant beauty
Voice pure and sweet like honey
Enchanting goddess

Posted by: Lorenzo Vega

There is no way the courts are going to give Britney her babies back. She is very dangerous to them and could end up harming them very badly with all the really selfish and crazy stunts she pulls. It is also very obvious that she has no real interest in being a mother. It is more important to her to flash her crotch over and over so she can embarrass her babies when they are older.

Posted by: Anonymous

X17.COM READ MORE!

Brit Gets a Shiny New Toy!

Britney's Blackout is Here!!

Brit Gets Lip Injections for a Prettier Pout!

Brit Gets Her Kids Back!

Britney Gets Booked!

X17's photographers say that Britney Spears frequently comments on the pictures they post on their Web site. They also suggest that the pop star sometimes goes out a day or two later and restages unflattering shots. "Forever,

she has been in on the joke," says Harvey Levin of TMZ. "She has also been severely mentally ill for a while."

Adnan Ghalib's agency, Finalpixx, has marketed sets of the two of them together in choreographed outings. In January, Finalpixx offered seminude pictures of Spears, taken by Ghalib, for a reported asking price of \$5 million. The pictures sold to an Australian magazine for \$57,000. The relationship faltered soon thereafter.

“Security has been enhanced today. Another metal detector has been added to the eighth floor where the hearing is being held,” reports a big, handsome celebrity gossip reporter in a suit outside the Superior Court building at 110 North Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles. Perched on stone lintels above his head are three weird figures representing Mosaic Law, the Magna Carta, and the Declaration of Independence.

The reporters for *Access Hollywood* and *Entertainment Tonight*, and for E!, Fox News, CNN, and other networks take turns doing stand-ups and interviewing their local experts on chapter 22 or 23 of the Dickensian courtroom drama in which the pop star gives birth, loses custody of her children to her ex-husband, and now makes a complete hash of her attempt to get the kids back. "Your laundry is out in front of everyone," the *Access Hollywood* woman explains to her viewers. "It's very embarrassing." Diagonally across the street, the core of the decayed downtown is wrapped around Frank Gehry's undulating, steel-clad concert hall, which looks like a giant steel-capped molar in a mouthful of rotting teeth.

Passing office workers, many of whom are black, stop and shake their heads. Downtown is part of *their* city, which, despite all the talk about drugs and gangs, still goes to church on Sunday and most emphatically does not endorse the loosey-goosey morality of the Hollywood set. "We are all sinners," one woman shouts. "Leave that poor, poor girl alone." Bystanders who use shouts and curses, and sometimes bottles and fists, to keep the paparazzi from their prey are referred to as "heroes." Two years ago, everyone wanted to be a hero, but now it is rare to get more than two or three a night. Here, where celebrity sightings are less common than in Beverly Hills, the local population of heroes is still relatively untapped.

A cluster of some 50 photographers has gathered around the corner at the loading-dock entrance to the courthouse on West 1st Street. Prancing in the center of the driveway is Larry Mays, 59, a wiry black man in a white shirt and tan pants, and a baseball hat that says "Man of Faith." He brandishes a bedsheet banner that reads "Ask Jesus to Save You Now." The paparazzi talk among themselves. "I'm gonna fall in front of her car, and she's gonna run over my foot," one pap jokes, foreshadowing what will in fact happen to a different photographer a few hours later.



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Eventually, the combination of Mays's religious enthusiasm and the 97-degree heat and their heavy gear begins to wear, and they start bickering and shoving for position. Felix is on the phone across the street directing six X17 photographers, who already know that Britney is driving herself and are betting that she will make a right-hand turn into the driveway.

"All right, she's coming," someone yells.

"Right there!" another shouts, pointing to the Mercedes convertible, which stops at the median, speeds up, and turns the corner, heading toward the courthouse's front entrance. The paparazzi break ranks and start running, carrying Mays and his banner with them. Britney pulls up to the entrance, rolls down her window, and starts talking with a female police officer. There's a little orange plastic Halloween pumpkin hanging from her rearview mirror, and five or six more pumpkins are scattered on the dashboard. The pop star is wearing wraparound Gucci sunglasses and eating junk food from a bag.

The police scream at the paparazzi to stay back. "Keep your fucking hands off my camera," one of the photographers yells. Britney rolls up her window and loops back around the block. The paparazzi run into the street to get the shot, but she keeps her window shut. As she turns into

Alegre. In Brazil, he owned two used-car dealerships and carried a gun. He moved to America to work in a valet-parking business. When Denis Castro came to America, Luiz took him in. "My first day, I got Britney exclusive," he remembers of his first outing with Castro. "It was at a restaurant on PCH, near Cross Creek in Malibu. We got \$20,000 for that shot. After 10 days, I was working by myself."

It's easily over 100 degrees in the sun, and the photographers are begging for water. Tomm, X17's field general, stands on the marble deck in an X17 hat and T-shirt, directing the photographers to stand closer or farther in order to get the widest range of angles. Inside the courthouse, a distraught Britney Spears has yelled "Eat it! Lick it! Snort it! Fuck it!" at a reporter who asked her how the custody hearing was going. "Eat it! Lick it! Snort it! Fuck it!" will be the new vulgarian mantra for the Britney-obsessed for a week at least.

After two and a half hours of waiting, a bell rings. The doors to the loading dock crack open, and the photographers all move their arms and shoulders to get another few inches of shooting space. Britney runs over a photographer's foot, can't seem to decide whether she is turning right or left, and blunders into the median strip. She rolls

'She was breathing like a bull.
It was like smoke was coming out of her nostrils.
Then she leaps out of the door, screaming.'

the loading dock on 1st Street, one of the paps loses his balance and falls heavily against the side of her car. She opens the door and steps out as the police hold the pack at bay.

"That's the shot right there," someone says. Across the street, Felix is uploading some video clips to the X17 Web site, squatting by the curb and linking his Sony HDV cam to his laptop.

Leaning against the fence is Luiz Betat, one of the founding members of MBF, a balding crew-cut man in his mid-30s with big gray eyes and a large nose. He wears a black T-shirt and blue jeans and a power pack on his hip. Whereas Felix is talkative, Luiz has been avoiding me during my nightly pilgrimages to the top of Coldwater Canyon Drive. Luiz is famous for getting pictures of Britney playing outside her house with her kids and other intimate shots that would appear to indicate an old-school talent for climbing fences, evading security guards, and sitting in ambush for days with a telephoto lens. Now that I am here, and he is here, in broad daylight, he offers me a crooked smile and motions me over.

"I never talk to anyone, so it's nothing personal," he says. He is a former motocross champion from Porto

down her window for a quick second and looks around, confused, then lurches forward, nearly colliding with another car. The photographers run for cover.

"Is Britney gone?" someone asks. The CNN cameraman is talking on the phone. "She almost killed about a hundred photographers," he says breathlessly. The hearing ended without the pop star's getting her children back, an event that in the greater scheme of things seems increasingly unlikely. Two months later, the star will be removed from the Summit strapped to a gurney by police officers at the end of a three-hour siege during which she locked herself and her son Jayden James in her bathroom. According to police sources, the pop star yelled at the police officers who put a sweater over her shoulders, "Don't cover me up. I'm fucking hot!"

On Thanksgiving Day, I eat a slice of pumpkin pie for breakfast and take a taxi up to the top of Mulholland. The late-morning air is crisp and clear. By the side of the road is a neat little offering of orange juice, ginseng tea, and coffee. None of the Brazilians particularly like turkey. All eight members of the MBF

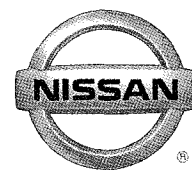


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team—Fabricio, Max, Sandro, Luiz, Felix, Eduardo, Ismael, and Carlos—are on duty. Sandro, a short, middle-aged guy with brown puppy-dog eyes, brings over one of those super-size chocolate bars you buy in airports and offers everyone a piece. In Brazil, he worked for the

THE DAY I SAW THE EMPEROR'S CLAY SOLDIERS

The day I saw the emperor's clay soldiers
I thought I understood the end of things—
blank faces staring back from 2,000 years.
A farmer found them; I found the farmer
in my father, grandfather, lost since
the Depression days of hominy pots.

My lost fathers are clay now too,
contained, kept from me by a wine-velvet
rope sagging between brass stanchions.
If I reach across, will the alarm sound,
lights flash, uniformed guards push me back?
I thought I understood the end of things.

The day I saw the emperor's clay soldiers
I wanted to be the electrician who
installs lights above the exhibits.
I know my father's best side, or knew,
though it makes me dizzy to remember.
I've never understood the end of things.

We're hollow men too, my fathers and I.
We never talked, even when we had
the chance—maybe afraid of the echo.
But 2,000 years is a long time
to wait, even for still, curt clay soldiers
who surely understand the end of things.

I came back a faithful soldier, stayed
until the museum closed, every day.
Then the exhibit left, and someone changed
the angle of those lights, not me,
and I lost sight of the emperor's soldiers.
That empty stand meant the end of things.

—JONATHAN MUSGROVE

Jonathan Musgrove is a poet, teacher, and poultry farmer who lives in Virginia.

federal police. The part of the new job he still can't get used to is running red lights and trespassing. "I feel bad," he admits. "Eight years ago, I put guys in jail for this. But I have to take care of my family." Parked behind Sandro is Maxi Rinaldelli from Buenos Aires, a member of XI7's West Coast Pix team. Behind him are a French pap from *Splash* and a Salvadoran from *Fame*.

Carlos, a curly-headed Brazilian charmer from Porto Alegre, is killing time in his tricked-out Land Rover LR3, which he pays for on the installment plan. Fabricio joins him. "Come out, Britney, come out come out," Carlos says.

"She's sending text messages on her phone to Kevin. 'Keep the babies. I don't want the babies.'"

"I want weed. I want coke."

At 4:44, the radio crackles. "She's out! She's out! She's out!" I jump into Fabricio's car and we drive fast down Coldwater Canyon. "Don't tell me she's going to Four Seasons again, or I will kill myself," Fabricio moans. Maxi, the Argentinian, is driving like a maniac in the wrong lane and trying to cut back into the queue. "He's new, so he's totally desperate," Fabricio says. "He's an amateur." He radios ahead for directions. Britney is at a record store. As everyone jumps from his car and rushes to the store window, I follow two of the paparazzi into a parking garage. A door opens, and I find myself standing next to her.

"Hi, Britney," I say. She looks at me and smiles brightly. "Hi," she says. "Happy Thanksgiving." One of the photographers asks her how her Thanksgiving is going so far. "Good," she says. Her eyes roll back in her head as she smiles. A Brazilian pap lowers his camera and opens her car door, as if he is still working at valet parking. The pop star gets into her car and starts driving straight toward a concrete wall.

"No, no, no!" one of the photographers shouts. He bangs on the trunk of the car to get her attention. Britney stops and rolls down the window. "This is the exit, right here," he says, pointing. The paparazzi stop shooting and form a human chain to guide her toward the exit. Britney laughs a carefree, crazy-person laugh. When the photographers finally succeed in getting her into the right lane, approaching the tollgate, the moment of human connection ends. She rolls up her window. The photographers pick up their cameras and start shooting.

On my last night on Mulholland Drive, Luiz finally agrees to let me ride with him. The inside of his two-seater Mercedes is a stripped-down steel cage that looks ready for Le Mans or Dakar. He has mounted a Sony video camera on his dashboard. As we drive down Coldwater Canyon in hot pursuit, he shows me some footage from the camera. "This is the day that she bought her new car," he says. When I ask him what pictures the pack is waiting for next, he shrugs. "Now I think she can

have a little car accident," he says simply. "Lindsay had an accident in that same car."

We arrive at the Four Seasons Hotel and wait outside the parking garage for two hours. When Britney's car appears at the bottom of the ramp, the paps all shoot and then run like hell to their cars. I jump in Luiz's car, and as I try to swing the heavy door shut it catches on the grass and the lining comes loose. I have to hold the door shut for three blocks until we hit a red light, but Luiz barely registers the damage. He is focused on his job. The faces of the drivers in the cars behind us show cupidity, avarice, dopey interest, fierce intensity. Some are high as kites. "What makes me feel very good is if something I do will be remembered forever," Luiz tells me as he drives.

The dividing line between the Britney Spears story as it exists today, with a pack of photographers trailing behind her, and Britney Spears as a normal star in the Hollywood galaxy, was the night that she shaved her head. After we park at the top of the canyon, Luiz decides to give me his account of the most famous shot from the most lucrative story in the history of the paparazzi. "OK, I'll show you," he says, flipping open his laptop and propping it up on his knees.

short 24-70 mm lens. He turned off the flash and started shooting. At first, he thought she was putting in extensions. "But a second after, I saw the machine in her hands, and I realized she was shaving," he says. "For sure I get excited, but I don't have a shaking legs or bullshit like this. I just realize I had a second to do my job. You can see from the first frame that she never saw I was there."

In the first photograph, the star looks happy, anticipating her actions. After a while, her mood sags. The key shot comes in the middle of the sequence: the pop star is alone with her own reflection in the mirror. "She was surprised, like me," Luiz says.

"I feel glad," Luiz says, when I ask him how he feels about never getting credit for the most famous paparazzi picture of the past decade, which a more enterprising photographer might have sold to X17's competitors for several hundred thousand dollars. "I'm glad that I gave a bunch of pictures to a guy like Regis. He did the work before me. He dreams about the perfect shot. He keeps living and thinking about the shots, like me. I can't tell my son, 'One time I was working for a guy who gave me a great opportunity when I was working in valet parking, he taught me a great business and a fun business, and you

The marriage of Britney Spears and the paparazzi is a marriage made in heaven, which is to say that it is as tawdry and upsetting as any other marriage.

A team from Bauer-Griffin was on Britney at her home in Malibu, and X17 jumped their story. The pop star came out, drove around, and then drove back inside her gate. When she left her house again, after 6 p.m., there were maybe 20 photographers in the chase.

Luiz shows me the pictures from his camera, with time and date stamps offering the exact model of the camera and the settings that he used for each shot. In the first images, the pop star is wearing a dark-gray sweatshirt with the hood up. As she entered the salon, Luiz tried to get a good angle by the door. "I saw I'm not gonna have a great shot," he said. "I realize maybe the place have other windows, other doors." He drove around to the back, where he found a sliding glass door that was blocked by a plastic curtain, through which he saw a sliver of light. "You can see on my pictures, there is black in the side," he says, pointing to the dark margins. "I got all these pictures through a one-inch space."

Beyond the glass door, the pop star was sitting no more than four feet away. The 70-200 mm lens on the camera he held in his hands was too long to get the shot. "Fortunately, I was carrying two cameras," Luiz says. He switched to his second camera, a Canon Mark IIN with a

know what I did? When I got a great picture, I turned my back and I sold to a guy I never sold to before!" If I told this thing to my son, he won't want to tell to nobody that I'm his dad."

The marriage of Britney Spears and the paparazzi is a marriage made in heaven, which is to say that it is as tawdry and upsetting as any other marriage. It is possible, even likely, that soon Britney Spears or some other big star with 15 or 35 photographers in hot pursuit will roll their car down the side of a mountain while on pills or drunk, and then there will be a righteous outcry against the paparazzi and the people who publish their pictures. In the rush to accuse and make sense of the moment, we will forget a simple truth. The paparazzi exist for the same reason that the stars exist: we want to see their pictures. Happier, wealthier, wildly more beautiful, partying harder, driving better cars, they live the lives that the rest of us can only dream about, until the party ends and we are confirmed in our belief that it is better, after all, not to be them. ■

David Samuels is the author of *The Runner: A True Account of the Amazing Adventures and Fantastical Lies of the Ivy League Impostor James Hague*, and *Only Love Can Break Your Heart*, a collection of essays and reporting, both published this spring.

How the Iraq War and George W. Bush sent
the movie industry back to its favorite era—the 1970s

BY ROSS DOUTHAT

Illustration by Steve Brodner

The Return *of the* Paranoid Style

Less than two weeks before the United States and its allies invaded Iraq, in March of 2003, Sony Pictures released a war movie called *Tears of the Sun*. The director was Antoine Fuqua, fresh off the success of 2001's *Training Day*; the star was Bruce Willis, playing a Navy SEAL lieutenant whose platoon is assigned to extricate an American caught up in a Nigerian civil war. The plot was a straightforward brief for moralistic interventionism: Willis and his men flout the orders of their caution-minded superiors and take on an army of Muslim rebels who are raping and pillaging their »



way through the African countryside. "For all the years that we have been told to stand down and stand by," one of the soldiers says as they lock and load. "For our sins," Willis's lieutenant agrees. Then they sweep in, guns blazing.

Tears of the Sun was a relatively modest film, budgeted in the tens rather than the hundreds of millions, but it was significant even so for being precisely the sort of movie 9/11 was supposed to spawn: righteously patriotic, confident in American might, and freighted with old-fashioned archetypes, with the rugged Willis saving the helpless Africans (and the lissome Monica Bellucci) from a horde of machete-wielding savages. It represented the kind of culture-industry sea change anticipated by the *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter's famous remark that 9/11 had slain irony. It seemed to vindicate the conservative columnist Peggy Noonan's prediction that the attacks would resurrect the spirit of John Wayne. And it was the sort of movie the left-wing critic Susan Faludi presumably had in mind when she lamented, in her recent book, *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*, that "the cultural troika of media, entertainment and advertising declared the post-9/11 age an era

of ... redomesticated femininity, and reconstituted Cold War manhood."

Nothing in this commentary, however, bears much resemblance to the way American popular culture actually has evolved since 9/11. The latter-day cowboys have conspicuously failed to materialize: in the past six years, the movie industry has produced exactly zero major motion pictures dedicated to lionizing American soldiers fighting on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan. *Tears of the Sun* proved to be an outlier; more typical of our cultural moment are the movies that its director and star turned out early last year. In Fuqua's *Shooter*, a redneck sniper goes up against a conspiracy that's headed by a villainous right-wing Montana senator (who happens to be a Dick Cheney look-alike) and aimed at covering up an oil company's human-rights abuses. In Robert Rodriguez's B-movie homage, *Planet Terror*, Willis plays another military man, but this time the plot, such as it is, turns on a zombie-creating nerve agent that may have been tested on Willis and his soldiers, the movie hints, as

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punishment for their having killed Osama bin Laden when the government wanted him kept alive and at large.

Such self-conscious nods to contemporary controversies should be taken, in part, as proof that our popular culture is more impervious to real-world tragedy than most critics would care to admit. The machine that churns out Hollywood blockbusters grinds on remorselessly, and nothing so minor as a terrorist attack is going to keep the next *Pirates of the Caribbean* from its date with box-office destiny.

But it wasn't just the reassertion of America's usual frivolity that caused the 9/11 moment to be stillborn; it was the swiftness with which the Iraq War replaced the fall of the Twin Towers as this decade's cultural touchstone. It's Halliburton, Abu Ghraib, and the missing WMDs that have summoned up a cultural moment in which bin Laden is a tongue-in-cheek punch line for a zombie movie and the film industry's typical take on geopolitics traces all the world's evils to the machinations of a White Male enemy at home.

Conservatives such as Noonan hoped that 9/11 would bring back the best of the 1940s and '50s, playing Pearl Harbor to a new era of patriotism and solidarity. Many on the left feared that it would restore the worst of the same era, returning us to the shackles of censorship and

conformism, jingoism and Joe McCarthy. But as far as Hollywood is concerned, another decade entirely seems to have slouched round again: the paranoid, cynical, end-of-empire 1970s.

We expected John Wayne; we got Jason Bourne instead.

The Bourne movies are the first major action franchise of the new millennium; they're also the highest-grossing example of the revival of the paranoid style in American cinema. Matt Damon's Bourne marries the efficiency of James Bond to the politics of Noam Chomsky. He's imperial overreach and blowback personified—the carefully brainwashed product of a covert CIA program who goes off the reservation and starts taking down his superiors, a succession of jowly, corrupt agents of the American empire. The Bourne saga's anti-government paranoia reached its peak in last year's \$227 million-grossing *Bourne Ultimatum*, which exposes the CIA as an all-powerful bureaucracy that can track anybody, anywhere, and is comfortable wiping out journalists, innocent bystanders, and even its own agents in the service of dubious war-on-terrorism aims. "Where does it end?" the lone free-thinking spook, Joan Allen, demands of

THE WINDSHIELD

I

My breath is furring a windshield
where I sit in my windcheater,
engine shut off, jolted by a rearview mirror's jolt,
and wait for my daughter

to be released from her rehearsal.

A production of *Much Ado*
in which she's taking the part of Ursula.
All at once I recognize that shadow

coming toward me as my own,
all at once recognize the Cathedral car park
where my mother has sat

while I've been impressed by *The Pirates of Penzance*
or held forth in a debate, coming through the dark
to find her turned the wrong side out.

II

To find her turned the wrong side out
like a birch relieved of its bark,
a custom relieved of its consuetude,
would be to avail myself of this opportunity to remark

on the pros or cons
of the death penalty or animal captivity
or integrated education.
This house proposes that we are slaves of duty.

This house proposes that we not sully
the memory of a parent, least of all one who sends a judder
through a child,

unleashing rather that selfsame, satin-lined grizzly,
that selfsame man-eater
whose breath is furring the windshield.

—PAUL MULDOON

Paul Muldoon's recent collections include *Horse Latitudes* (2006) and *Moy Sand and Gravel* (2002), which received the Pulitzer Prize in poetry. He teaches at Princeton University.

her superior. "It ends when we've won," he snaps, before ordering up another execution.

Such "fear thy government" anxieties are always laced throughout American pop culture. But they belong most of all to the 1970s, when the one-two punch of Vietnam and Watergate sparked recurring visions of isolated Americans trapped in the gears of an irreducibly complex conspiracy: Gene Hackman's surveillance expert in *The Conversation* (1974), tearing up his apartment in search of proof that his every move is being watched; Robert Redford's CIA agent in *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), forced to go on the run from shadowy forces within his own government; Warren Beatty's reporter in *The Parallax View* (1974), manipulated by a sinister corporation to become the "lone gunman" patsy in its latest bought-and-paid-for assassination.

Now they belong to us as well. Hollywood's highest-profile conspiracy theorist is, of course, Michael Moore. But the more telling figure is Stephen Gaghan, the screenwriter for Steven Soderbergh's Oscar winner, *Traffic* (2000), who moved on to script and direct *Syriana* (2005), the first major Middle East movie released after the invasion of Iraq. *Traffic* and *Syriana* are superficially similar, offering kaleidoscopic visions of American policy that rove across

Parallax View, to J. J. Abrams's *Mission: Impossible III* (2006), whose villain is an overzealous neoconservative bent on provoking a terrorist attack.

Even what seems to be the great exception to this pattern, the TV thriller *24*, turns out not to be so exceptional after all. Yes, the show's Jack Bauer is in certain respects the anti-Jason Bourne, with his unyielding, torture-happy pursuit of America's enemies. But Bauer's ass-kicking takes place in a landscape straight out of the '70s, in which America's terrorist enemies are enabled by (in no particular order) a cabal of businessmen hoping to foment a Middle Eastern war and benefit from skyrocketing oil prices; a group of hawkish Cabinet officials who plot to remove from office (or assassinate) their dovish superiors; a Nixonian chief executive who permits terrorist attacks on American soil as a pretext for U.S. military intervention in Central Asia; and an endless host of traitors inside America's antiterrorism outfit.

24 is unusual, in the current pop-culture context, in that it allows that America does face terrorist enemies. But because it intimates, again and again, that the terrorists are creations of our own corrupt elites, it's actually typical of our neo-'70s moment.

Reviving '70s-style pessimism is a natural way for the film industry to connect with a public coping, again, with a military quagmire, rising oil prices, and corruption in high places.

borders and multiple points of view. But whereas the former takes care to present the architects of our failed drug policy as decent (if misguided) people struggling with the moral compromises required in a fallen world, *Syriana* eschews nuance entirely, tracing all the ills of Mesopotamia to a malign nexus of Texas oilmen, neocons, and a trigger-happy CIA, and culminating with the agency ordering a missile strike on an inconveniently liberal Arab leader to preserve an American oil company's bargaining position.

The same paranoia about sinister forces behind government conduct pervades Hollywood's recent backward glances, from the McCarthy era of George Clooney's *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005) to the secret history of the CIA unveiled in Robert De Niro's *The Good Shepherd* (2006) to the bleak, wilderness-of-mirrors portrayal of Israel's 1970s war on terrorism in Steven Spielberg's *Munich* (2005). It's been woven into futuristic dystopias (2006's *Children of Men* and *V for Vendetta*) and into anti-corporate thrillers (last fall's *Michael Clayton*, 2005's *The Constant Gardener*). And although the paranoid style is most prevalent in prestige movies, it's shown up in more-escapist fare as well, from the hit TV show *Prison Break*, which cross-pollinates *Escape From Alcatraz* with *The*

The ultraviolent genres of the 1970s are enjoying a renaissance as well. The modern slasher flick was born in the aftermath of Vietnam, in shocking, deliberately nihilistic films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). Beginning in the mid-1980s, the genre took a detour into increasingly comic territory, with the semi-laughable *Nightmare on Elm Street* series giving way to outright farces like the *Scream* films. But now the old nihilism is back. Some of the modern gorefeasts, such as *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006), recapitulate or just remake '70s splatter pictures; others, such as the *Saw* tetralogy, break new ground in so-called torture porn. And a subset of the genre—Eli Roth's *Hostel* (2005) and its sequel, *Hostel: Part II* (2007); John Stockwell's *Turistas* (2006)—might be described as "blowback horror," films in which feckless young Americans are trapped in overseas abattoirs that evoke al-Qaeda's execution videos.

The slasher renaissance has been joined by a revival of zombie films. The Vietnam era was bracketed by George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and the Iraq era, too, has its defining undead: the fast-moving zombies of Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002) and its sequel, *28 Weeks Later* (2007).

(The latter doubles as an explicit Iraq War allegory, featuring marines operating from a London "Green Zone" while they try to reestablish order in a zombieified Great Britain.) There's been a broader Romero revival as well, encompassing 2004's *Dawn of the Dead* remake and its zombie parody, *Shaun of the Dead*, and Romero's own return to zombieland, in *Land of the Dead* (2005) and this year's *Diary of the Dead*.

As with slashers and zombies, so with vigilantes. The '70s had *Dirty Harry* (1971), *Walking Tall* (1973), *Death Wish* (1974), and all their sequels, with *Taxi Driver* (1976) thrown in for good measure. The '00s have served up a slew of remakes and imitators—as though the two decades were "twin dark alleys in the American imagination," Eric Lichtenfeld wrote recently in the online magazine *Slate*—culminating in the release last fall of *The Brave One*, a self-conscious homage to the *Death Wish* movies, with Jodie Foster filling Charles Bronson's shoes as a violated New Yorker looking for payback.

To all these '70s revivals we can add yet another: the rebirth of tragic realism. The most talented directors of the Vietnam era set about reworking and darkening archetypal American narratives—the detective story in *Chinatown* (1974) and *The French Connection* (1971); the gangster saga in *The Godfather* (1972); the war movie in *M*A*S*H* (1970) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979); and the western in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) and the blood-soaked films of Sergio Leone. The Iraq era has produced a similarly gritty revisionism. The past year of cinema alone saw David Fincher's *Zodiac*, a deliberately inconclusive procedural about a real-life serial killer from the '60s and '70s; James Gray and Ridley Scott channeling Scorsese and Coppola in *We Own the Night* and *American Gangster*, respectively; and Sidney Lumet channeling, well, himself in *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*.

But the new realism finds its principal home on pay cable, a more expansive—and explicit—medium than the Coppolas and Lumets and Altmans and Scorseses had to play with. Three HBO shows led the way—*The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and *Deadwood*, each offering a bleak revision of a classic American genre. (Tony Soprano's famous whine, "Whatever happened to Gary Cooper?," is a grim counterpoint to the post-9/11 fantasies of a John Wayne revival.) They've been joined by lesser lights such as *Brotherhood* and *The Shield*, and by the first great revisionist sci-fi serial, *Battlestar Galactica*, helmed by an ex-*Star Trek* writer and featuring enough sex, violence, and religious fanaticism to set Gene Roddenberry spinning in his grave.

Insofar as American foreign policy impinges directly on these worlds, it provides ironic context to events on the home front. On *The Wire*, the beleaguered cops of Baltimore find that their city's bloody drug wars are near the bottom of a terrorism-obsessed FBI's list of priorities.

The commentary in *The Sopranos* is more pointed still: midway through the final season, Tony's hapless son, A.J., abruptly decides to join the Army and ship off to Afghanistan, in search of the moral purpose that's eluded him as a mobster's son in suburban New Jersey. His horrified parents quickly buy him off with a fancy new car and a movie-business job—not because that's what a Mob family does, the show suggests, but because that's what almost any upper-middle-class American parents would do. For the Sopranos and their law-abiding neighbors alike, the wars that followed 9/11 are for other families to fight.

This last reality brings us to the question of how authentic our back-to-the-'70s moment really is. The Vietnam War was a cultural phenomenon in part because it couldn't help being one—there was no way for Americans to keep the war at arm's length, not with more than 50,000 dead, a million deployed over the course of the war, and every able-bodied teen and twentysomething at risk of conscription. In contrast, the Iraq War, a lower-casualty conflict fought by an all-volunteer military, takes place at a greater distance from the everyday lives of those Americans who don't have a family member deployed overseas. The objective correlatives needed for a truly pessimistic era simply don't exist for many Americans today. The last time around, we were participants; this time, we're voyeurs.

This doesn't mean that the current paranoid, doom-ridden mood in cinema and television was manufactured in Hollywood and foisted on an unwilling public. Up to a point, at least, Hollywood is meeting Americans where they are. Mistrust of government and disquiet about the country's future have risen to Vietnam-era levels, and reviving '70s-style paranoia and pessimism is a natural way for the culture industry to connect with a public coping, once again, with a military quagmire, rising oil prices, prophecies of ecological doom, and corruption in high places.

But the '70s revival isn't simply a case of supply responding to demand; it's also a case of Hollywood giving the audience what Hollywood *wants* to give it. The '70s were in many ways dreadful years for America, but they're remembered much more fondly in the film industry. There's no surer way to establish your artistic (and political) bona fides than to name-drop a '70s movie—whether it's George Clooney bringing up *All the President's Men* (1976) while promoting *Michael Clayton*, or Stephen Gaghan remarking that of course he was "thinking about *The Parallax View* and also *Three Days of the Condor*" while making *Syriana*. The suggestion is always the same—that the age of leisure suits and sideburns was also the high tide of politically engaged filmmaking, before the studios embarked on the relentless pursuit of the blockbuster and the Reagan reaction pushed American culture steadily to the right.



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This is a self-serving story line, but it contains an element of truth. The changing economics of the business, and the changing public mood, did make the '80s a more middlebrow, conservative decade in pop culture. After out-of-control projects such as Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate* (1980), the film industry grew wary of auteurs and their excesses and used box-office hits such as *Star Wars* (1977) and the *Indiana Jones* saga as its templates. On television, *All in the Family* and *Maude* gave way to *Full House* and *The Cosby Show*. The Oscars that had gone to *The Godfather* (1972) and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) went to *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Gandhi* (1982) and *Out of Africa* (1985). Eighties Hollywood was still grappling with the Vietnam War—in *Platoon* (1986) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), among other films—but the rumpled liberal truth-seekers who raced, wide-eyed, through the thrillers of the '70s were increasingly replaced by the likes of Tom Cruise dogfighting with Russians in *Top Gun* (1986) or Patrick Swayze leading his "wolverines" to victory against Soviet invaders in *Red Dawn* (1984).

artistically and at the box office, when it's intimated than when it's made explicit. And the closer a movie hews to real-world events, the greater the strain of making the Vietnam-era mood fit the Iraq-era facts.

The paranoid style of filmmaking, for instance, is defined in both its Vietnam- and Iraq-era incarnations by the insistence that villains at home are more dangerous than any enemies abroad. This was a plausible point of view when the enemy abroad was Ho Chi Minh: the Vietnam War didn't begin with "Charlie" bombing downtown Manhattan, and there was little chance that VC cadres would follow America back home. It's a tougher sell in the age of Osama bin Laden, and as a result an air of omission, even denial, hangs over this genre's contemporary incarnations.

Consider, as a telling example, Jonathan Demme's remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004). The brilliance of John Frankenheimer's original lay in its willingness to conflate threats domestic and foreign, by featuring a buffoonish, demagogic Joe McCarthy figure who himself turned out to be a pawn of Communist agents (his wife

In its haste to re-create the '70s, Hollywood hasn't come to terms with the differences between Vietnam and Iraq—differences in our enemies, our military, and the impact on the American psyche.

During the '90s, the expansion of cable TV and independent filmmaking began to change this middlebrow-or-bust equation: HBO's *Oz*, the brutal prison drama that paved the way for *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*, debuted in 1997; the "indie" craze kicked off by Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape* (1989) built steadily to 1996, the Year of the Indie, when four of the five Best Picture nominees were produced outside the major studios. But the thing that actors and directors seemed to miss the most about the 1970s—the mood of the decade, the mix of paranoia and pessimism and ambivalence about America itself—made for a poor fit with the optimism of the Clinton boom. What nihilism there was came across as winking rather than bone-deep—Tarantino, not Polanski—and even the strongest forays into subversion and social criticism, such as David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999) and David O. Russell's Gulf War tragicomedy *Three Kings* (1999), felt somewhat weightless.

The age of George W. Bush and the Iraq War meshes much more neatly with the industry's '70s nostalgia. Just not quite as neatly, perhaps, as Hollywood seems to think. As we've seen, the broad-brush similarities between the two decades have been used to impressive cinematic effect. But because the two decades don't map precisely onto one another, the '70s revival is more successful, both

chief among them). The obvious way to update the story would have been to portray a Cheney-like politician being manipulated by an al-Qaeda sleeper cell. Instead, Demme replaces the Red Menace with an evil corporation, in the process transforming a brilliantly murky story in which even paranoiacs turn out to have enemies (a fairly accurate take on the McCarthy era, as it happens) into a predictable rant against corporate power, in which the only thing America has to fear is Halliburton itself.

Islamist terrorism has made occasional small-screen appearances, on shows like *The West Wing* and Showtime's *Sleeper Cell* as well as on *24*. But as far as the movies are concerned, the events of 9/11 have proven far less influential than the demands of the paranoid style. (Or the fear of Muslim backlash, perhaps, whether in the form of overseas riots or press releases from the Council on American-Islamic Relations.) More big-budget movies featuring Islamist villains were released in the 1990s than in the seven years since 9/11, and apart from docudramas like *United 93*, last fall's *The Kingdom*—released to hand-wringing over its supposed jingoism—was the first major studio release to feature Muslim terrorists since 1998's *The Siege*.

Even in films that aren't taking thinly veiled jabs at the Bush administration, terrorist baddies turn out to be Eurotrash arms dealers (2006's *Casino Royale*), disgruntled

hackers (2007's *Live Free or Die Hard*), a sinister air marshal (2005's *Flightplan*), or the handsome white guy sitting next to you in the airport lounge (2005's *Red Eye*). Anyone and anybody, in other words, except the sort of people who actually attacked the United States on 9/11.

The new wave of vigilante films suffers from a similar detachment from certain on-the-ground realities. Whereas the original *Dirty Harry*-style movies emerged in response to an enormous rise in violent crime, today's vigilante films are being made in a country where the crime rate has been dropping steadily for 15 years and where ordinary people are safer from violence than at any point since the early 1960s. During the decade of *Taxi Driver* and *Death Wish*, New York City averaged roughly 1,500 murders a year; the New York of *The Brave One* had fewer than 500. (Jodie Foster's gun-toting avenger alone would have been responsible for more than 1 percent of the city's annual killings.) Likewise, the slasher films of the 1970s corresponded with a succession of high-profile serial murderers, including Ted Bundy and Son of Sam, the Hillside Strangler and John Wayne Gacy, and of course the Zodiac killer. No such epidemic exists today: the *Hotel* films may nod to al-Qaeda's execution videos and Abu Ghraib, but the *Saw* films and the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* remakes and all the rest are pure spectacle, an homage to yesterday's fears rather than an expression of today's.

This sense of homage runs through many of the neo-'70s offerings, as though Hollywood were going back to the same creative wells rather than drilling new ones. It isn't just the run of remakes and revisions, or the too-obvious attempts to imitate Alan Pakula or Scorsese; it's the slew of projects, such as *Munich* and *Zodiac* and *American Gangster*, that are actually set in the '70s, as though our own era can't quite sustain the bleakness that a '70s revival requires.

Nowhere is this problem more apparent than in last fall's trio of anti-war "message movies," all of which seemed incapable of seeing the current conflict through any lens except that of Vietnam. Brian De Palma's *Redacted* takes the plot of his 1989 melodrama, *Casualties of War*—in which American grunts commit rape and murder in the Vietnamese highlands—gives it a "found footage" spin, and comes out with a story in which American grunts ... commit rape and murder in Iraq. Paul Haggis's *In the Valley of Elah* portrays a Vietnam vet dad (Tommy Lee Jones) investigating the death of his Iraq War vet son and encountering a cocktail of wartime trauma and home-front disintegration familiar to anyone who's seen *The Deer Hunter* (1978). And Robert Redford's *Lions for Lambs* ham-handedly evokes Vietnam in no fewer than three intertwining narratives. In the first, two working-class marines, one black and one Hispanic, are sent to certain death in Afghanistan; in the second, a Boomer journalist (Meryl Streep) quotes the Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again"

to a hawkish GOP senator (Tom Cruise) who's trying to sell her on a new military strategy; in the third, an idealistic professor (Redford himself) exhorts a spoiled student to live up to the standard of protest and political engagement set by, yes, the Vietnam generation.

The point is not that similarities don't exist between that conflict and this one—the Iraq War has more than its share of follies in high places, wartime atrocities, and home-front miseries. (De Palma and Haggis both drew on real-life incidents for their films.) But the entertainment industry, in its haste to re-create the '70s, hasn't come to terms with the differences. The differences in our war aims, for one thing. The differences in the enemies we face, for another. The differences in our military—not only in its composition, morale, and leadership, but in the way it's regarded by civilians back home. Nor has the industry come to terms with what this last distinction says about the impact of the Iraq War on the American psyche—namely, that although the conflict has made us doubt our leaders, it hasn't made us doubt ourselves.

That is, in the end, the key distinction. The Vietnam War was a bipartisan fiasco that took place amid profound social disarray, and everyone was understood to be complicit—Democrats as well as Republicans, ordinary citizens as well as politicians, the soldiers on the ground as well as the Best and the Brightest shipping them overseas. The conflict in Iraq is occurring during a time of relative domestic peace, and as a result the pessimism it's produced, though real enough, hasn't shaken our civilizational confidence in nearly the same way.

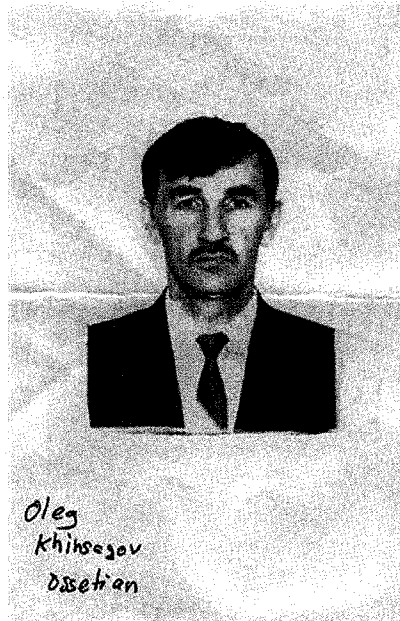
The difference is readily apparent in our politics. The Vietnam era had riots and rallies, the Weathermen and the Symbionese Liberation Army, because the rot seemed to go so deep that only desperate measures were worth contemplating. The resistance movements of this era, by contrast, spend most of their time raising money for Democratic candidates, because it seems to many people that winning a few elections could make the nightmare go away. And what's true for MoveOn.org is true for the entertainment industry. The popular culture of the 1970s reflected the widespread sense that only a revolution could set things right. But nobody's going to write a 21st-century version of Peter Biskind's *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (1998), a book about the revolutionary spirit and counter-cultural excesses of '70s Hollywood stars; this generation of stars is too busy fund-raising for Hillary and Obama.

All of this suggests that the '70s revival, though pervasive at the moment, may not have that much staying power. The original decade of nightmares didn't end when the Vietnam War did; it persisted through Ford and Carter, oil shocks and stagflation, and the Iran hostage crisis. The new '70s may go out with George W. Bush. ▀

Ross Douthat, an Atlantic senior editor, blogs at rossdouthat.theatlantic.com.

Meet Oleg Khintsagov, a small-time hustler in Russia who can get you dried fish, furs, Turkish chandeliers ... and weapons-grade uranium. He's not the only one.

BY LAWRENCE SCOTT SHEETS



A Smuggler's Story

On the morning of January 31, 2006, Oleg Vladimirovich Khintsagov, a slightly built, 49-year-old auto mechanic, got out of bed in the ramshackle house he shared with relatives in Nogir, a working-class-village-turned-suburb just a few miles inside Russia's border with ex-Soviet Georgia. It was »

still early, the first light shimmering off the fresh snow atop the peaks of the nearby Caucasus Mountains.

For 15 years, Khintsagov had eked out a living, like so many Russians after the Soviet collapse, mostly as a small-time trader. Cheap Turkish chandeliers, dried fish, sausages—Khintsagov would peddle just about anything he could get his hands on, and the returns were usually meager. But now his luck looked about to change. In fact, if everything went according to plan, he would end the day very much richer. No truck would be needed to ferry today's goods. The 100 grams of highly enriched uranium in his tattered leather coat was tucked into a plastic bag—the type a day laborer might use to wrap a sandwich.

Khintsagov headed out of Nogir toward the Russian-Georgian border in an old, white Niva four-wheel drive with three men from Georgia who had driven over to pick him up. One was Revaz Kurkumuli, a drug dealer. The other two had engaged in petty smuggling with Khintsagov in the past—Henry Sudjashvili, who painted and peddled cheap reproductions of European masters, and Vazha Chikhashvili, a corrupt, low-ranking Georgian interior ministry official. Khintsagov had bragged to his companions for months that what he had in his pocket was just a sample, and that he could get at least two kilograms of the grayish-green powder—not quite enough for a nuclear bomb, but, for a buyer with the right equipment and experience, a good start.

The men were traveling 100 miles to the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, to meet a Turk who had earlier told Khintsagov's three Georgian associates that he represented a Muslim from a "serious organization" that was interested in getting HEU. There was, of course, the problem of the Russian-Georgian customs post, just a few miles from Nogir. But one of Khintsagov's relatives worked there on the Russian side, and he saw to it that things went smoothly. When Khintsagov and his group approached Tbilisi, they veered off to the hardscrabble Mukhiani district on the outskirts and then arrived at a run-down, nine-story Soviet-style apartment block. There, in a squalid two-and-a-half-room apartment on the seventh floor, Khintsagov and Sudjashvili waited for their Turkish buyer.

Unfortunately for Khintsagov, however, the "buyer" was a Turkish-speaking operative of Georgia's security service, which had gotten wind of his plans and set up a sting.

COURTESY OF GEORGIAN INTERIOR MINISTRY
At first, the Georgian government didn't believe that Khintsagov's uranium was weapons grade. "There are a lot of scammers saying they have nuclear materials," Archil Pavlenishvili, Georgia's chief nuclear investigator, told me in Tbilisi in January 2007. "In Khintsagov's case, we thought that, at most, he had some low-grade radioactive stuff, not highly enriched." In fact, according to tests done by the U.S. government shortly after Khintsagov's arrest, his HEU was more than 89

percent pure, a level that the U.S. testing report described as "suitable for ... military purposes including nuclear weapons." Even more alarming was the apparent ease with which Khintsagov, a minor-league hustler, had acquired the material (most likely in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, as he initially claimed to the Georgian authorities). Only by happenstance had the Georgians been able to apprehend Khintsagov, who had made several attempts to sell his HEU in Georgia's lawless, breakaway territory of South Ossetia—one of several geopolitical black holes created in the region by the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.

In 1989, the Soviet economy was imploding. Khintsagov, who had worked at a state-run auto-repair facility and as a tractor driver after he finished school in 1973, was lucky enough to land a job in Iraq, as one of several thousand Soviet citizens brought in by Saddam Hussein to help develop the country's oil fields. But that stint ended in 1991, and Khintsagov headed home, where he had no prospect of a decent job. Much of the Soviet workforce was either unemployed or, more often, underemployed. Professors had become paupers. White-collar professionals were being turned into penniless paper pushers.

So Khintsagov became a *spekulant*—a speculator—still a pejorative in those early days after the fall of the U.S.S.R., where such activity had once been a crime. First he traded in fish, anything from the dried *vobblly* that working-class Russian men washed down with vodka, to the trout that thrive in the streams of the Caucasus and the much more expensive, and illicit, Caspian Sea beluga that pass through Khintsagov's home region on the way to markets in Moscow. He dabbled in another Russian staple—*kolbasa*, or sausage. And at some point he began dealing in furs, a trade that took him from Nogir to Novosibirsk, the Siberian city famous for its academic research facilities, and infamous for the secret cities nearby that formed the heart of the Russian nuclear-weapons complex.

It's unclear how or when Khintsagov began trading in nuclear materials. Pavlenishvili says that Khintsagov was apparently so afraid of his nuclear suppliers that after he was arrested, he refused to give even their first names.

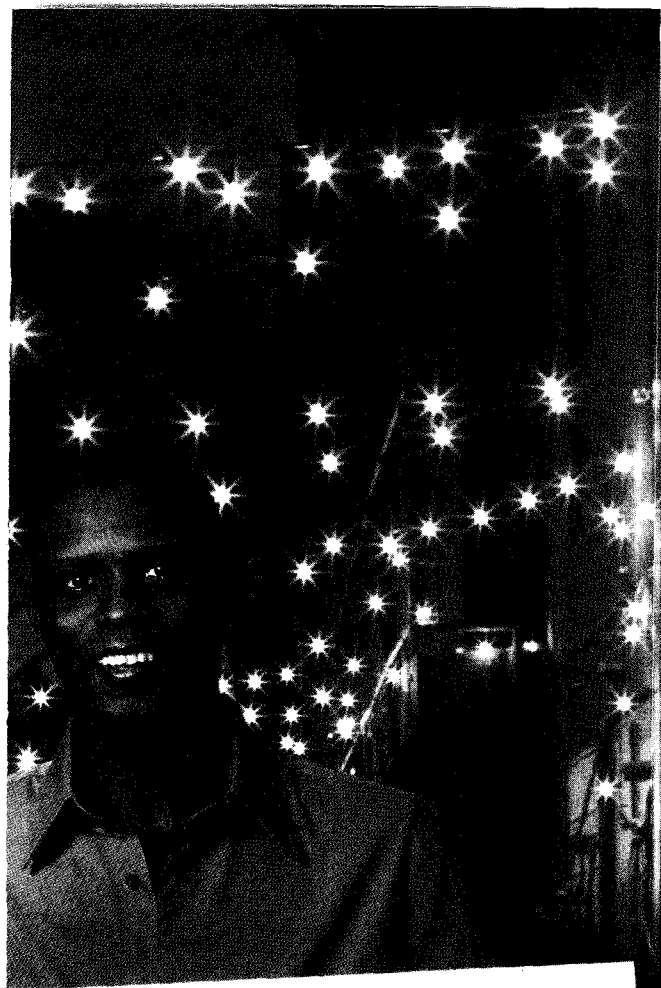
"He could have just invented some generic Russian names—Oleg, Dmitry. But he didn't even do that," said Pavlenishvili. "He was evidently terrified, possibly for his relatives, and possibly because when his jail sentence in Georgia is up, he knows he will be deported back to Russia." Somehow, Khintsagov acquired the uranium, and once he did, he needed to find a buyer.

One natural hunting ground was South Ossetia, a tiny region of Georgia that borders Russia and is one of several unrecognized, Moscow-supported statelets left over from the Soviet collapse. A strip of land about the

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size of Long Island and home to no more than 50,000 people, the region is partly controlled by Russian-backed separatists, and partly by the Georgian authorities. It effectively split off from Georgia in 1992, after a year of ethnic bloodletting between Georgians and Ossetians that left about 1,000 people dead and at least another 10,000 homeless.

Today, any pretense South Ossetia had to independence has been abandoned. The Russian flag flies alongside the South Ossetian yellow, white, and red tricolor over the separatist government headquarters, a drab, early-Khrushchev-looking affair in the run-down capital of Tskhinvali. The tree-lined main avenue is still called "Stalin Street" (an ethnic Georgian, Stalin was said to have also had Ossetian roots). Most of the government's top leaders are Russians with no ties to the region. Russia keeps 1,000 peacekeepers there (500 ethnic Russians and 500 North Ossetians) as part of a 16-year-old agreement; it has handed out passports to the local population and says it will defend the territory if Georgia acts to reassert control.

Faced at independence with economic collapse, Georgia's corrupt central government had essentially ignored South Ossetia, which became what its inhabitants joked

authorities first heard about the nuclear material. They decided to set their trap using a Turkish-speaking Georgian agent, who approached Khintsagov's Georgian associates with an offer of \$1 million for a "test shipment" of 100 grams of bomb-grade uranium—more money than Khintsagov could ever have hoped to get in South Ossetia. By having Khintsagov bring the HEU into Georgia, Interior Minister Ivane Merabishvili told me, the Tbilisi government could also ensure that the materials did not disappear into the "black hole" of South Ossetia.

I first heard of Khintsagov's arrest for smuggling HEU on March 15, 2006. I had just interviewed President Saakashvili, the brash, 40-year-old leader of Georgia's "Rose Revolution," in 2003, which had ousted the corrupt government of Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet foreign minister and longtime Georgian chief-tain. Saakashvili had been complaining to me (in flawless English polished at Columbia University) about commercial smuggling through South Ossetia, hinting about the region's use as a conduit for more-nefarious purposes. After I stepped out of his office, one of his top advisers mentioned that a Russian national had recently

Khintsagov was apparently so afraid of his
nuclear suppliers that after he was arrested,
he refused to give even their first names.

was "the world's biggest duty-free shop." Near the administrative border with Georgia, traders even set up an enormous open-air market where people from all over the region came to buy everything from Russian gasoline to pasta, all free of the import duties that they would pay in other parts of Georgia. (In 2004, shortly after President Mikheil Saakashvili came to power in Georgia, his government shut down the market by placing a police and customs post nearby.) South Ossetia also became especially popular with car thieves—Ossetian, Georgian, and Russian alike—who ripped off automobiles in Georgia, drove them the short distance to South Ossetia, and sold them to middlemen who then ferried them to Russia. And the U.S. government says counterfeit \$100 bills traceable to South Ossetia have surfaced in at least four American cities.

According to Georgian authorities, Khintsagov first tried to find a buyer for his uranium in South Ossetia, which he visited at least five times during 2005. Meanwhile, he was also working with his old smuggling buddies back in Georgia, who had "business partners" in South Ossetia, according to Pavlenishvili. At least one of Khintsagov's associates had been under Georgian government surveillance for drug dealing. That's how the Georgian

been caught trying to smuggle into Georgia a significant amount of HEU, which he had earlier tried to sell in South Ossetia. When I asked for more information, I was told that it was too early to discuss details: the Georgians were trying to get the smuggler to cooperate and lead investigators to the supplier of his bomb-grade uranium. (Citing the same reasons, U.S. officials in Tbilisi had also asked that the case be kept quiet.) Over the next 10 months, I constantly prodded the Georgians to give me the details of the story.

What prompted their eventual acquiescence was probably a combination of factors: frustration over Russia's lack of cooperation; the impending release of an incident report by the International Atomic Energy Agency; and weariness with U.S. pressure to keep a lid on an incident that Tbilisi saw as compelling evidence of the international threat posed by South Ossetia's lawlessness.

At last, on January 13, 2007, I met with Interior Minister Merabishvili. We were supposed to talk about Georgia's efforts to reform its once-hopelessly-corrupt police force. But the night before, I had prevailed on my government interlocutor to ask again for information about the HEU smuggling case. My contact had sighed and placed a call

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SMUGGLERS DELIGHT: Since 9/11, Georgian authorities have disrupted two attempts to sell weapons-grade uranium, but the region's disputed borders (in red) and weak governments make it difficult to police.

to Saakashvili's cell phone. "Can we talk about the HEU smuggling case yet?" he asked him. "I'm taking Lawrence Sheets over to Vano [the interior minister] tomorrow to talk about police reforms."

"Yes, go ahead," I heard Saakashvili reply.

The next day, when I arrived to meet with Interior Minister Merabishvili, my contact walked up to him and in a low tone passed on the president's message giving Merabishvili permission to discuss the HEU case.

Merabishvili, a friendly, compact man, nodded. I sat down in front of his huge desk, bare except for an impressive bank of phones, a big-screen plasma monitor, and two cartons of Kent cigarettes. After a few minutes of questions about police reforms (he spent some time using the plasma screen to show off the views from the 400 security cameras now installed across Tbilisi), we turned to the subject of nuclear smuggling via Georgia and its breakaway territories.

Merabishvili explained the basics of the case: how the authorities had caught Khintsagov, and how they believed his capture had been only the second interdiction of a serious international HEU smuggling attempt—both through Georgia—since the 9/11 terror attacks. Then he picked up one of the telephones and started making calls.

Within a few minutes, aides began walking in and placing photos, diagrams, and documents in front of Merabishvili. One was a photograph of Khintsagov. Another was a picture of the HEU wrapped in plastic. There were summary documents detailing the 2006 HEU case and a similar one in 2003; there was a Georgian translation of documents from U.S. nuclear laboratories with the test results on the confiscated nuclear materials. Merabishvili complained that the Russians had claimed they could not identify the source of the bomb-grade nuclear material. He then picked up the phone and called Pavlenishvili, his chief nuclear investigator, ordering him to brief me.

I met Pavlenishvili in the lobby of the luxurious Tbilisi Marriott hotel. A short, earnest man in a grey overcoat who spoke as plainly as he dressed, he corroborated what I had been told by the interior minister about Khintsagov—the details of his case, his Georgian cohorts, his attempts to sell his HEU in South Ossetia. Early on in the investigation, Pavlenishvili says, the Georgian government informed the Russian Embassy in Georgia of Khintsagov's arrest, offering routine consular access. He said the Russians did not respond. The Georgian general prosecutor also sent a letter to his Russian counterpart, asking the Russians to check Khintsagov's house in Nogir for HEU. The

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Georgian nuclear investigators knew of no response from the Russians. However, about a month after Khintsagov's arrest, the Russian security service—the FSB, successor to the Soviet KGB—did send two operatives from Moscow to Tbilisi to collect samples of the material for analysis.

The FSB later sent their Georgian counterparts a brief report on the results. On page five of the letter, which I ultimately obtained from other sources in the Georgian government, the Russians confirmed that Khintsagov's cache was indeed HEU. The FSB put the level of enrichment at 89.38 percent, just below the initial American assessment. Yet the letter went on to say that because the material had been produced more than 10 years ago, its origins were impossible to determine.

Every nuclear physicist I contacted—from Calgary to Monterey to Moscow—cast doubt on that claim. The first was Boris Zhukov, director of a facility with a typically Soviet name: the Laboratory of the Isotopic Complex of Experimental Nuclear Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Zhukov is known as a straight shooter, someone unafraid to speak to what remains of the independent Russian press on the poisoning, in London, of former Russian KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko. But over the

HEU reportedly showed the presence of two telltale trace isotopes (U-234 and U-236) strongly suggesting that the material came from Russia.

On January 26, 2007, the day after William J. Broad and I broke the news of the smuggling attempt in *The New York Times*, an official in Russia's federal atomic energy agency accused the Georgians of not providing enough HEU for analysis. Yet nowhere in the FSB's letter, nor in another document I acquired in which the Russian agents acknowledge collecting a sample of the HEU, do the Russians say anything about having too little material.

I sent Pavel Felgenhauer, one of Russia's foremost independent military and security analysts, a copy of the FSB's letter to the Georgians. Felgenhauer referred to it as an *otpiska*—a meaningless, vacuous response. Felgenhauer has always maintained that Russian nuclear stockpiles are far less secure than the world would like to think. He also speculates that rogue elements in the Russian military and security services could be involved in the trade of radioactive materials, citing the documented sales of mines, mortars, guns, and rocket launchers by Russian military officers to Chechen separatists—weapons the separatists then used to kill Russian troops.

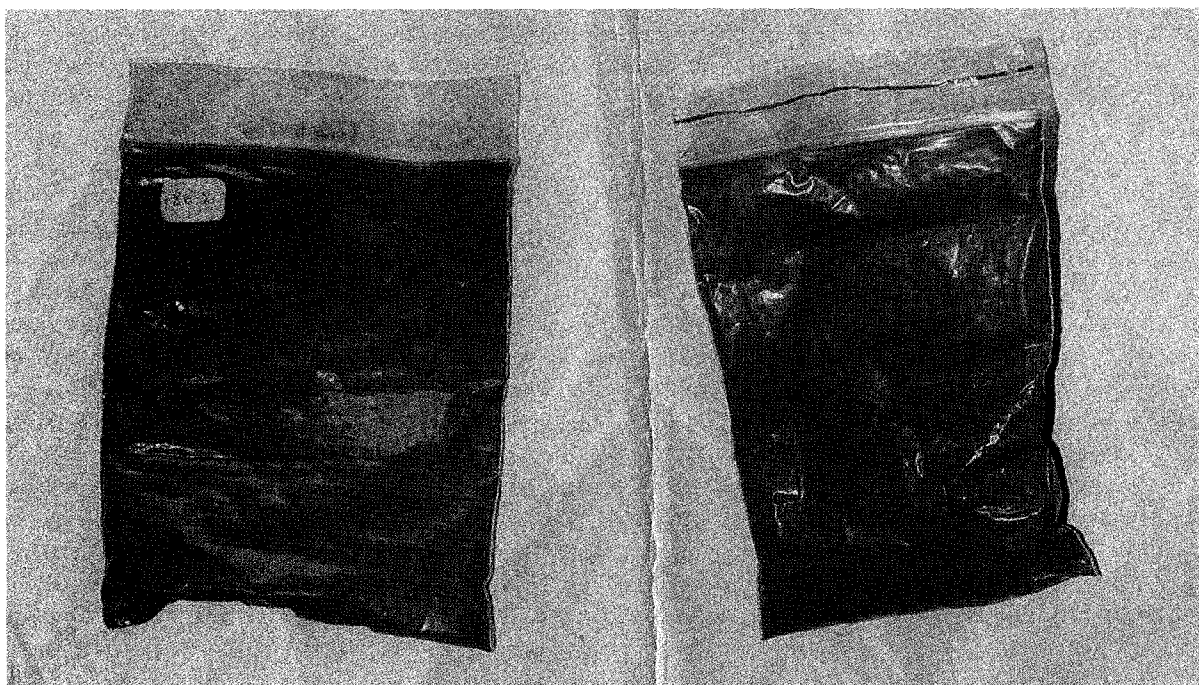
The 100 grams of highly enriched uranium in his tattered leather coat was tucked into a plastic bag—the type a day laborer might use to wrap a sandwich.

phone, Zhukov sounded skittish, saying that he didn't want to discuss anything military or anything secret. I told Zhukov that I wanted to ask him a simple question: Was it possible, as this FSB letter indicated, that the Russian government would be unable to identify the source of the HEU that Khintsagov had been caught with? "In general terms, of course, everything can be traced. Every batch of highly enriched uranium that is produced is given a 'passport,' and it's very carefully entered into log books," Zhukov replied. "Of course, if they want to, they can identify where it came from." Zhukov then hung up.

I later spoke with David Morrissey, a chemistry professor at the National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory at Michigan State University, the world's premier facility for producing radioactive isotopes for research. Morrissey called the Russian claim implausible. "Highly enriched uranium has unique characteristics," he said. "It's like when the police take a fingerprint. No two fingerprints are the same." As for the Russian claim that the material's age—judged by its radioactive decay—could have obscured its origins, Morrissey dismissed this as well, noting that correcting for radioactive decay was a relatively simple procedure. The U.S. analyses of Khintsagov's

But William Potter, the director of the Center for Non-proliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, says the clumsy FSB document claiming that the HEU's origins could not be identified more likely reflects something else: "The Russians are in a general state of denial about the loss of nuclear materials. It is absolutely perplexing." Potter says Russian nuclear physicists still refuse even to contemplate that terrorists could get their hands on enough HEU to build an atom bomb. "They maintain that it is beyond the capability of a non-state actor ... to make a fissionable device," Potter says.

Whether Khintsagov had the two kilos he claimed to have, or had access to more, remains unknown; the Russian government has never said whether it even investigated Khintsagov's claims. (My numerous phone calls and e-mails to the FSB and the Russian Interior Ministry have also gone unanswered.) Although a national nuclear program might need only 10 or 15 kilograms of HEU to make a nuclear bomb, terrorists working more crudely would likely require at least 40 kilos. Has enough material leaked out of Russia since the Soviet collapse to enable terrorists to make a bomb? "We simply don't know the answer," says Potter, "because nobody knows how much stuff existed



RUSSIAN TAKEOUT: The U.S. analysis of Khintsagov's seized material called it "suitable for ... nuclear weapons."

in the first place. It's like with drug trafficking: it's just impossible to determine what the real interdiction rate is. It's sometimes said that the interdiction rate for narcotics is less than 10 percent. One can imagine that for nuclear trafficking, it's bound to be far less."

Two other recent Georgian interdictions, many of their details not public until now, suggest that the trade in Russian nuclear materials is more than a trickle.

About 1:30 a.m. on June 26, 2003, Georgian border guards near the town of Sadakhlo—a muddy village near where Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia meet—apprehended an Armenian named Garik Dadayan as he tried to cross into Armenia with about 200 grams of U-235 bomb-grade uranium. Sadakhlo has a reputation as a smuggler's paradise: Armenian and Azeri traders meet there and do business in everything from Armenian brandy, Azeri tea, Caspian Sea caviar, and Turkish CDs to cheap tool kits and jeans. It's one of the few informal contact points between Azerbaijan and Armenia, two nations that have been warring over territory for most of the past 20 years.

Dadayan fits much the same profile as Khintsagov. Born in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, he has only a basic education, according to Armenian court records that I obtained, and no known full-time profession. He reportedly suffers from psychological and physical disabilities that he incurred fighting in Armenia's war with Azerbaijan.

Like Khintsagov, Dadayan made only feeble efforts to conceal his stash of HEU, hiding it in a cellophane bag tucked inside a metal tea box. But several specialists

I spoke to speculated that because his HEU, according to U.S. analyses, also contained the chemical compounds UO_2 and U_3O_8 (which emit more radiation than U-235), it set off the radiation detectors the Georgians had at the border. The guards say that when the sensors sounded, Dadayan tossed the satchel containing the tea box filled with bomb-grade uranium onto the ground. He said he'd never seen the substance in the box before and that the cellophane bag had only been for food scraps. So sloppy were his smuggling efforts that, according to Armenian court records, his notebook contained scribbles mentioning "U308" and the amount of money—believed by Georgian officials to be \$15,000—that he was to receive for acting as a nuclear mule. Dadayan was handed over to the Armenian government, tried, and sentenced in 2004 to two and a half years in prison.

The Armenians and Georgians say Dadayan got his bomb-grade uranium from contacts in Siberia. Even the Russian FSB, in 2003 more inclined than now to cooperate, confirmed to the Georgians that before his arrest Dadayan had traveled twice by rail from Moscow, where he had been living, to Novosibirsk. "In the early stages, yes, they were cooperative," Pavlenishvili told me. "Then suddenly, cooperation stopped. We don't know why. We thought they discovered from which lab or factory [the HEU] was from, and they maybe arrested the supporters of Dadayan, and after that, they lost any interest in this case."

A Georgian government document summarizing the incident suggested a complex web of contacts. Dadayan's role appeared to be only that of a courier. The deal to smuggle the bomb-grade uranium, according to

the Georgians, reportedly involved a corrupt Russian military officer, elements of the Georgian and Armenian criminal underworlds, and an Armenian contact of Kurdish descent working in Russia.

Finally—or, more likely, not finally—there is the case of Tamaz Dimitradze, another Willie Loman-esque figure, this one from Georgia, who was apprehended on August 4, 2006, with four glass vials containing a kilogram of unenriched uranium “yellowcake.” According to Pavlenishvili, who told me of this previously unreported case when we met in Tbilisi, the Georgians had put Dimitradze under surveillance. “We had information from our sources in the Georgian criminal underworld that Dimitradze was expecting a shipment of radioactive materials. We didn’t know anything about what type,” Pavlenishvili said. Dimitradze crossed a bridge from Georgia proper into Abkhazia, another breakaway Georgian territory under Russian protection, and met with two Russian associates who had traveled there from the nearby Russian Black Sea resort town of Sochi.

A spectacularly beautiful region whose palm-tree-lined beaches once served as a prime Soviet movie location, Abkhazia was also the site of one of the U.S.S.R.’s top-secret nuclear-research facilities. (According to Shevardnadze, even he, the leader of the Georgian Communist Party, needed special permission from Moscow to visit the complex.) Several reports note that up to two kilograms of HEU may have gone missing from the Abkhaz facility after the capital city, Sukhumi, fell to separatist forces in 1993.

Dimitradze was arrested after crossing back into Georgia and arriving in the Black Sea port city of Batumi. According to Pavlenishvili, Dimitradze said he took possession of the yellowcake from the two Russians. During the investigation, Dimitradze claimed he knew nothing more about the two men or the source of the unenriched uranium.

Citing Dimitradze’s repeated business failures and his careless, cavalier behavior, Pavlenishvili described him, like Oleg Khintsagov and Garik Dadayan, as a complete amateur. “He probably did not know exactly what kind of stuff he even had,” Pavlenishvili said. “He just dreamed of getting some nuclear materials and becoming rich man.” After a trial closed to the public for security reasons, Dimitradze was sentenced to seven years in prison. His sentence was reduced to five years on appeal, but the government—citing mandatory sentencing laws—has appealed to have the original seven-year term restored.

Dimitradze had vague ideas, according to the Georgians, of either selling the uranium to Turkish middlemen in Georgia or smuggling it into Turkey in search of a buyer. “It is a well-known rumor in the Georgian criminal world that you can sell anything in Turkey,” Pavlenishvili said. He said that there had long been reports in such circles about

a Turkish man with the nickname *Ekimi*—“the Doctor” in Georgian—interested in obtaining nuclear material. The Georgians say they know nothing more about who “the Doctor” might be.

The Georgians, of course, have good reason to publicize these three cases. Two of them highlight the dangers posed by the loose frontiers and unaccountable “governments” of disputed territories effectively under Russian control. And all three are strong arguments for the United States to continue providing Georgia with millions of dollars in assistance to strengthen its customs and intelligence services. But even with those rationales in mind, Georgian authorities could have been far more aggressive in seeking to embarrass the Russians. They deliberately passed up an opportunity to apprehend Khintsagov at the “border” with South Ossetia, for example, which would have been a far more effective dramatization of the threat posed by that region’s rampant smuggling. They waited 11 months to publicize Khintsagov’s arrest. And this article marks the first media disclosure of the details of Tamaz Dimitradze’s case.

Set aside the motives of the Georgians, and you still have the facts of the cases themselves. All three happened within the past five years, well after more-stringent controls on nuclear materials should have been in place. Two involved significant amounts of highly enriched uranium that, according to the Russian analysis sent to the Georgians, seem to have come from two separate sources. And all three plots were carried out by poorly educated amateurs who knew little about the nuclear materials they were trafficking and wanted only to make a quick buck. All three men made foolhardy mistakes—in some cases transporting their atom-bomb materials through functioning border points, and in others widely advertising their efforts to obtain and sell nuclear materials.

What we know we don’t know about the state of Russian nuclear material is frightening enough. But what if these three would-be traffickers had been not bumbler but professionals—interested not in money but in ideology, focused on accumulating enough bomb-grade material to assemble a nuclear weapon that could kill millions of people? What if they had avoided border posts altogether and detoured through unmonitored mountain passes, or had chosen to cross the thousands of miles of porous, underpoliced borders Russia shares with countries like Kazakhstan?

Unfortunately, if the stories of Oleg Khintsagov, Garik Dadayan, and Tamaz Dimitradze suggest anything, it is that the answers to such questions may soon no longer be hypothetical. ▀

Lawrence Scott Sheets, a visiting scholar at Michigan State University and a regular contributor to National Public Radio, is working on a travelogue about the upheavals following the Soviet collapse, to be published by Crown.

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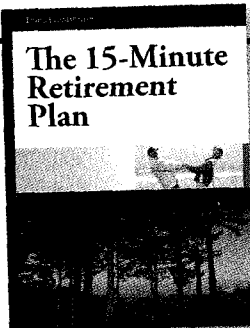
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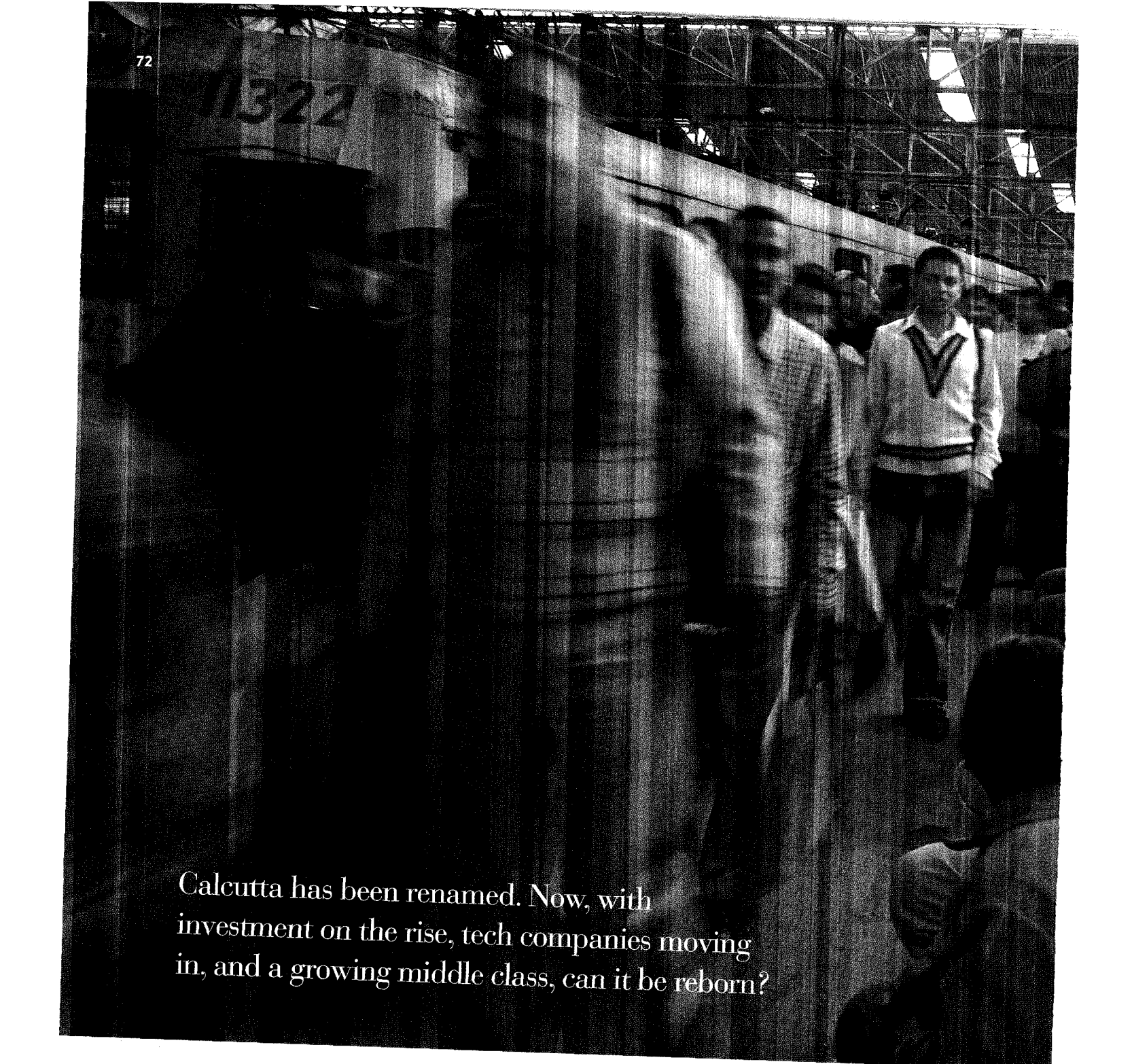
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Calcutta has been renamed. Now, with investment on the rise, tech companies moving in, and a growing middle class, can it be reborn?

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

Photographs by Atul Loke
PANOS PICTURES

Oh!



MOVING UP: Sealdah Station is the last stop for trains from India's northeast.

Kolkata!



RUNNING OUT OF TIME: New laws are forcing rickshaws off Kolkata's streets.

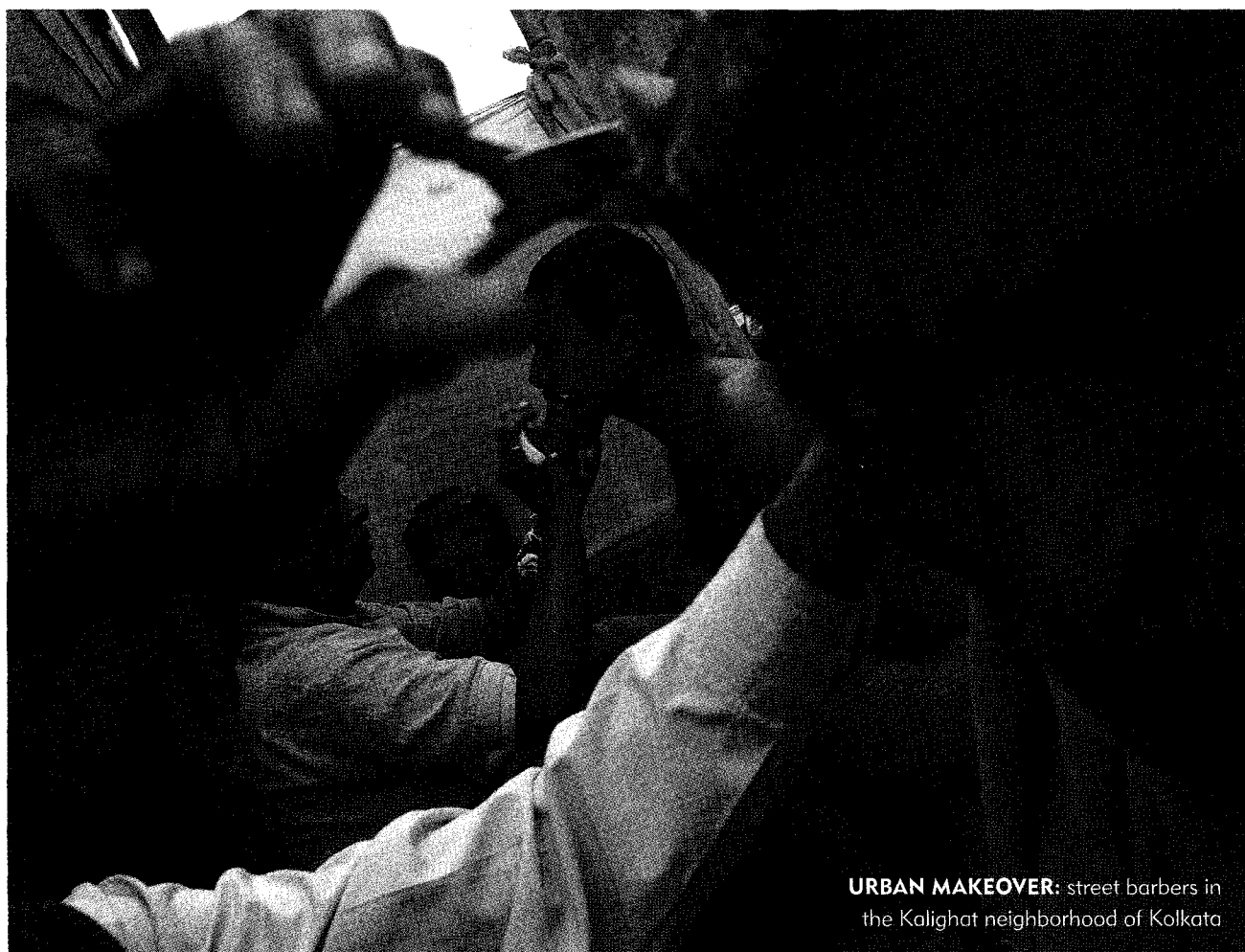
When judging a new place, a traveler must first always reckon with his or her point of departure. Arriving in Calcutta by bus from Dhaka, the capital of next-door Bangladesh, is like arriving in West Berlin from East Berlin during the Cold War—a trip I made several times. Grayness is left behind. Instead of the rusted signs of Dhaka, giant, swanky billboards advertising

global products glow in the night like back-lit computer screens. Traffic is dominated in Dhaka by creaky old bicycle rickshaws; in Calcutta, by late-model cars. There are, too, the sturdy yellow Ambassador taxis, zippy little Indian-produced Marutis loaded with families, and many luxury vehicles.

Yet the rickshaws that you also see in Calcutta provide a signature image of exploitation worse than almost anything you'll see in Dhaka: one human being is transported by another, who is not merely furiously pedaling uphill, but actually running uphill on his bare feet, pulling the rickshaw like an animal.

Calcutta is, frankly, obscene. I walked out of a tony espresso bar—its windows cluttered with credit-card stickers—that offered an eclectic Indian-cum-cosmopolitan cuisine of extravagant mocha cocktails and *paneer-tikka* sandwiches. As I left the air-conditioning for the broiling street, I was careful not to stumble over families sleeping on cardboard along a sidewalk where men and women urinated. It was here that a young man began to follow me. After several blocks, I still couldn't shake him. He thrust his résumé as a documentary film producer in my face and

MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM
For a slideshow with more photos of Kolkata
by Atul Loke, visit www.theatlantic.com/kolkata.



URBAN MAKEOVER: street barbers in the Kalighat neighborhood of Kolkata

pleaded with me to hire him. "I realize I am invading your privacy, sir," he said. "But what am I to do? Perhaps you are angry with me. I will stop bothering you, but only if you give me a job." He was dressed poorly but neatly, out to make an impression. In the United States, junk-mail offers and telemarketing calls at least allow you the luxury of tearing up the piece of paper or hanging up the phone. In Calcutta, such unwanted entreaties take a very personal form. Street solicitations here are a form of cold-calling. Escape is impossible.

Calcutta's invasive poverty stopped hippies in their tracks. The hippie trail across Asia in the 1960s and '70s followed the Ganges east to the holy Hindu city of Varanasi, then veered north to Kathmandu, Nepal, rather than continuing on to Calcutta. "On first acquaintance," Geoffrey Moorhouse writes in *Calcutta: The City Revealed* (1971), the city "is enough to destroy any romantic illusions about gentleness and brotherly love."

The slums may be worse in Mumbai (more than four times as many people live in them), but the slums there are more segregated from the wealthier areas; in Calcutta, beggars and street people spread throughout the

city, making it much harder to avoid the poor. And like Mumbai, Calcutta has a population density that is among the world's highest.

The first week of the summer monsoon—smothering heat followed by pounding rain—is the best time to experience Calcutta's two separate and unequal universes: the world with air-conditioning, and the one without. The first is that of an upwardly mobile, international civilization; the second constitutes the miserable reality of the street, where 1.5 million poor Calcuttans live within a few feet of air-conditioning, even as they will never experience it. The door to this espresso bar, or to that charming bookshop with those Penguin paperbacks, represents a border as hard to cross as any drawn on a map.

In north Calcutta, the pavement is taken up by long stretches of tarpaulin-and-burlap lean-tos, inside which families live, with older siblings watching younger ones while the women work as maids and the men as construction workers. But as wrenching as the scene appears, if you wade through the street people, past this partially opened door, or under that chain, you will find another Calcutta: a maze of beautiful and derelict 18th- and 19th-

century mansions, built by former rajas and merchants, with blackened, weather-stained walls; intricate brickwork in Muslim, Hindu, and neoclassical styles; and colonnaded courtyards strangled by vines and other greenery. The most impressive of these is the Marble Palace, whose lightless rooms are crowded with dusty Belgian mirrors, classical statuary, Chinese vases, hookahs, crystal glass chandeliers, lithographs, and four paintings by Rubens. Like this rambling palace, Calcutta is an eccentric jumble, of which poverty is but the outer layer.

Despite the distracting horror of pavement life, the real story of Calcutta is its transformation into a global city, with expatriates returning to invest in malls and restaurants, in the process enforcing the standards of service they learned in the West. Early this year, a 900,000-square-foot mall opened in the southern part of the city; among the largest in India, it's one of 40 new retail centers set to open in Greater Calcutta by 2011. This is in addition to 20 new multiplex cinemas arising as the city expands to the east. Then there are the luxury condominiums going up, with names like Highland Park and Silver Spring. "If you think of the British Empire as the first go at globalization," explained Santosh Ghosh, an urban planner, "then Calcutta, as the capital of British India, with its museums and botanical gardens, was a global city when Singapore and Kuala Lumpur were still villages. Now Calcutta is finally catching up."

buying sprees. According to a recent study by McKinsey & Company, discretionary spending by Indian consumers accounted for 52 percent of average household consumption in 2005 (up from 39 percent in 1995); by 2025, it will rise to 70 percent.

"It's not the fancy malls," Mukerjee said, "but the low-end centers that are the heart of the change—the people who have created jobs for themselves by altering clothes, fixing appliances, and so on. I have a tailor who travels from an outlying slum area each day to occupy a particular place on the sidewalk with his sewing machine, where his clients come to him. He's saving money, he told me. That's what Calcutta is really about these days." The pavement soup kitchens selling noodles and curry dishes testify to the rise of a lower middle class, up from abject poverty, that requires cheap meals during the workday. The increase in family cars has led to the most-persistent traffic jams I have experienced in the developing world, worse even than Tehran's, Bangkok's, or Cairo's.

Sealdah was my own private, childhood nightmare," Professor Sukanta Chaudhuri told me, referring to the railway station that in the late 1940s, after the partition of India, housed thousands of Hindu refugees from Muslim East Bengal, who had arrived in Calcutta destitute, with nowhere to go. Even today, because it's the terminus for trains arriving from India's underdeveloped northeast, Sealdah remains unnerving, with

Too often, our Western fixation on the visual brutality of Calcutta's poverty has obscured its harsh, unsentimental upward mobility.

The spirit of globalization fuels the gusto with which this Hindu-Muslim city celebrates Christmas—another British legacy—with colored lights festooning the streets, decorations on sale everywhere, and life-size Santa Clauses sculpted of mud and straw in the same workshops that produce the myriad Hindu gods. On Christmas Eve, thousands of Calcuttans of different religions converge on St. Paul's, the British-built 19th-century Gothic cathedral, infusing the holiday with a cosmopolitan ambience.

The pace of change in Calcutta still isn't on a par with that of China, but the city is headed in the same direction. Shikha Mukerjee, who directs a nongovernmental organization and has spent her whole life in Calcutta, notes that the world of the leisurely wealthy, with their live-in servants, is disappearing, as the upper classes live a less secure, more frantic existence. But Calcutta's middle class, which has always been here, has taken on greater visibility, thanks in part to its consumerist

its armies of people disgorged onto the platforms, fanning out amidst the other armies squatting with their suitcases on the station floor.

"But you know what?" the gray-haired English professor said. "Most of those people, with little or no help from the government, settled themselves somewhere. They didn't just die or go begging." The process continues today. The Calcutta street, Chaudhuri and others explained, is less a dead end than a way station, just as shantytowns are in Turkey. But since India is so much poorer than Turkey, the way station is that much harsher. "If you come back each decade," notes Chaudhuri, "the poverty looks the same, so you think nothing has changed. But the individuals on the street are different. They come from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, and Bangladesh, with no place to live, because on the streets you can earn something, save something, and move on." Opportunity, as much as poverty, creates slums. Indeed, if there is a trend in



NO PLACE LIKE HOME:
a billboard for new housing,
outside a local fish market

Calcutta's slums, it is the fitful transition—gentrification, in its own way—from *kutcha* (mud) and *jhupri* (burlap and cardboard) temporary housing to the more-permanent *pucca* housing, made of cement and corrugated iron. Whole areas are changing their appearance, as Calcutta begins to look less like some subcontinental Dickensian nightmare and more like any other dynamic city with great disparities of wealth.

To a degree, Calcutta has always been like this: too often, our Western fixation on the visual brutality of its poverty has obscured its harsh, unsentimental upward mobility. In his novel *Those Days* (1981), a detailed, Proustian study of 19th-century Calcutta, Sunil Gangopadhyay writes:

Houses, big, small and medium had mushroomed everywhere to accommodate the new generation of working babus, freshly migrated from villages. Weavers, barbers, washermen and oil crushers followed in their wake to minister to their needs. The

Permanent Settlement had robbed many poor peasants of their land, not only in Bengal but in Orissa, Bihar and even distant Uttar Pradesh. These landless labourers flocked to the city's environs in thousands, ready to pick up any kind of menial work.

In a city where avoiding the poorest of the poor has been impossible, urban balkanization—the stratification of the economic classes, through the emergence of satellite towns and gated communities—is finally enabling the better-off to do so. It isn't so much crime that these new, upwardly mobile classes wish to avoid: Calcutta, despite the poverty, is a fairly safe city. It is something deeper. The newly rich now want to flaunt their wealth; that, in turn, creates a need for them to escape into protected neighborhoods, where they can revel in their new affluence. Along with the birth of gated communities has come an explosion in the number of private security guards, who themselves bestow status on the new rich.

These planned communities exist for other reasons, too. As Professor Chaudhuri told me, "The new upper classes are afraid of seeing ugliness." They want to "sanitize themselves" from the freak show on the streets. They want to see only other well-off people. Wealthy Indians have always acted as if the poor were invisible, but now there is a means to render them literally so.

The Calcutta street that these new rich want to escape is an enactment of rural life in the midst of the metropolis. Women line up at the pavement pumps the way they do at the village well. Just as in the village, domestic life is lived out of doors, without any notion of privacy or, for that matter, bathrooms. And because of the heat, people who live on the street are often semi-naked, grooming themselves with no sense of embarrassment. Calcutta's deracinated new rich may have less tolerance for Indian village life played out on city streets, but the poor will continue to stream in from the neighboring states of Bihar and Orissa as long as the prospect of a job in construction or another industry promises upward mobility.

One perverse dynamic of this migration is that poor construction workers living on the streets and in *bustees* (slums) are getting in the way of new satellite towns, gated communities, and special economic zones planned by the state of West Bengal. In power for three decades, the West Bengal administration constitutes the world's longest-serving democratically elected Communist government. Yet, to win over the hearts and pocketbooks of

a profusion of jute factories and made West Bengal the Ruhr of India for a time, with most of the country's iron and steel industry. In recent decades, Calcutta has been the heart of Indian trade unionism and Communism. "Continued exclusion of the poor in Calcutta will only result in outbreaks of riots and destructive violence," V. Ramaswamy, a Calcutta-based business executive and grassroots organizer, told me. For all Calcutta's aspirations to become a global city, its history suggests that the transition won't be altogether peaceful. When West Bengal's government tried to outlaw rickshaws in December 2006 as a "disgraceful practice," the city's 18,000 rickshaw pullers launched vigorous protests.

In 2001, Calcutta's name was officially changed to *Kolkata*, reflecting the native Bengali pronunciation. For generations reared on *Calcutta*, the new name is awkward. It carries no evocative association, either with British rule or with the city's infamous poverty. That might be for the better. Just as globalization has invigorated localisms, "Kolkata" may yet become a new global and Bengali entrepôt for eastern India, Bangladesh, and Burma, as old trade routes reaffirm themselves and Calcutta—that is, Kolkata—regains the hinterland it lost when the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent created East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). "Kolkata could be the gateway to Southeast Asia," Professor Monideep Chattopadhyay, another urban planner, told me. Picture a future of fast highways

Just as globalization has invigorated localisms, 'Kolkata' may yet become a new global entrepôt for eastern India, Bangladesh, and Burma.

voters unhappy with statist policies, the Bengali Communists now have to follow the Chinese path of privatization with a vengeance. Last November, violent protests erupted over the expropriation of land in West Bengal for development projects and duty-free zones to attract foreign investment from nearby Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and Singapore. The army was called out—the first time in years that the military has been needed to bring peace to a major metropolitan Indian city.

Of course, in China, the land would have been expropriated and that would have been that. In China, a Communist regime can routinely act in a rampantly capitalist manner. But not in democratic India; particularly not in Calcutta. Unlike Delhi, with its grand medieval history under the Mogul emperors, Calcutta was founded only in the late 17th century by the British, and it has been a place of social conflict ever since. That tendency was exacerbated by the Industrial Revolution, which brought

that create a dense ganglion of connections between Kolkata in India, Dhaka and Chittagong in Bangladesh, Mandalay in Burma, and Kunming in China. Think of annual road rallies from Kunming all the way to Kolkata. In a world with weaker national borders and stronger regional identities, Kolkata may again become what it was, at once an Indian city and a Southeast Asian one.

"It could be the Harvard of India," says Kingshuk Chatterjee, a research fellow at the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, explaining that primary and secondary education in Kolkata are probably the finest in the country, and that Bengalis fill many places at the best universities in Mumbai and Delhi. This can be achieved, he says, if the Communist-left alliance that governs West Bengal stops making political appointments at local universities.

Kolkata's high level of education also makes the city likely to evolve into another Indian hub for information



MILLIONS of pedestrians cross
Kolkata's Howrah Bridge every day.

technology. More than 200 IT companies have opened offices in West Bengal, and the government hopes Kolkata will one day rival its neighbors Bangalore and Hyderabad as a major computer-technology center. "Forget Mother Teresa, think IT and young people with disposable income," one local journalist exclaimed.

The most-extravagant visions are possible for Kolkata because, for the time being, the city has one thing that other Indian cities lack: adequate fresh water. Kolkata lies astride the vast estuarial delta of Bengal. A few miles downriver from the city, the Hooghly, an arm of the Ganges, opens out to become an inland sea of Amazonian proportions. Sailing down it, I saw on both shorelines—extending for 96 miles all the way to the Bay of Bengal—a row of towering kilns for brick-making: such is the appetite for building materials, as Kolkata gets bigger by the day. The availability of water makes that expansion possible, even as rising sea levels from global warming threaten this growing mega-city's survival.

Sailing back upriver at night, I passed under the cantilevered Howrah Bridge, Kolkata's urban icon, spanning

the Hooghly between the industrial suburb of Howrah and downtown. The bridge was constructed during World War II to speed British divisions to the Burmese front. From any direction, it looms like a gargantuan Erector Set, taking up half the sky, its draperies of steel dwarfing everything around it. Vehicular and human traffic on its span are bumper-to-bumper, toe-to-heel, as masses of people cross the river, its waters the color of faded cardboard from the silt that it carries downstream. Even at water level, the noise of the crowd and the cars is like the din of a locomotive perpetually passing. Fancy new motorcycles idle next to hand-pulled rickshaws. People tote everything from briefcases to birdcages; crates and baskets rest on their heads. Just below the entrance to the bridge on the Kolkata side is a bustling flower market with mountains of marigolds and rose petals. Hawkers sell razor blades, textiles, plastic pots, cheap radios. The in-your-face pleas of beggars, peddlers, and other supplicants are unceasing. Nobody gives up here. ▀

Robert D. Kaplan is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security in Washington, D.C.



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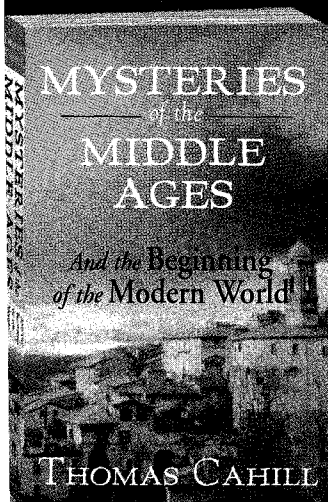
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THE I OF THE CAMERA

Joan Crawford perfects her pose by the
fireplace, circa 1935. Thomas Mallon
assesses "a life less lived than pro-
duced" in "I Am Joan Crawford."

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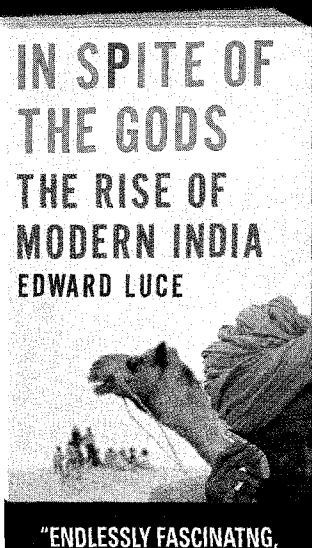
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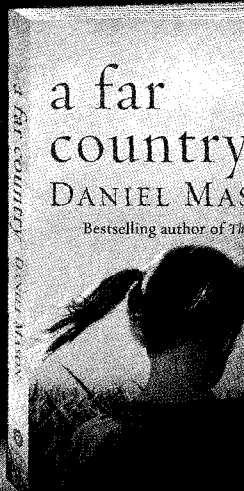
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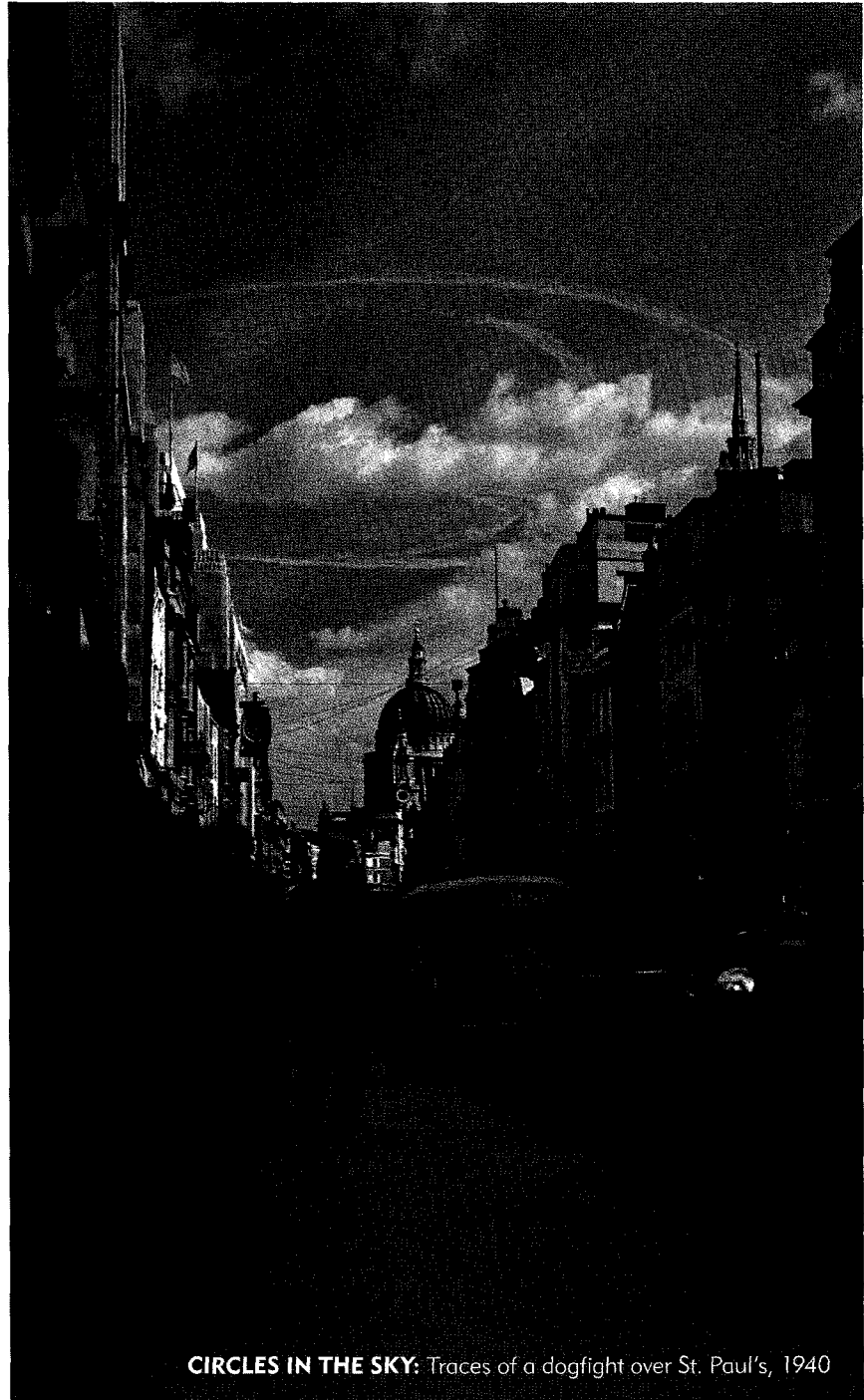
Editor's Choice: How the Blitz saved Britain

Black Saturday

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Everyone would remember the weather. On the afternoon of Saturday, September 7, 1940, "one of the fairest days of the century, a day of clear warm air and high blue skies," as the novelist William Sansom recalled, 348 German bombers and more than 600 Messerschmitt fighters set off from northern France for England. Goering, who had arrived the day before to take direct command of the mission, watched from the cliffs of Cap Gris Nez as the planes formed up over the Channel. At 4:14, the first aircraft were over the English coast, and British spotters assumed that this unusually large bomber stream would soon disperse to attack the usual targets—airfields, sector stations, oil installations. But as it flew westward over Kent and Sussex the fleet remained intact, forming a block 20 miles wide. Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West, at tea in the garden of their country house in Kent, saw the planes—the most concentrated force arrayed against Britain since the Spanish Armada—"coming over in wave after wave." Farther west, in the countryside just outside London, the American newspaperman Ben Robertson watched the bombers as they "flew at a very great height, glistening like beautiful steel birds in the afternoon sunshine." Minutes later, London—a city that, as he wrote, "had taken thirty generations of men a thousand years to build"—was burning. The first raid ended at 6:10, but two hours later more than 300 additional bombers came for a second attack, which lasted until 4:30 the next morning.

In the preceding weeks, the Germans had made some "nuisance raids" over London, but now, for the first time, the city was subjected to sustained assault.



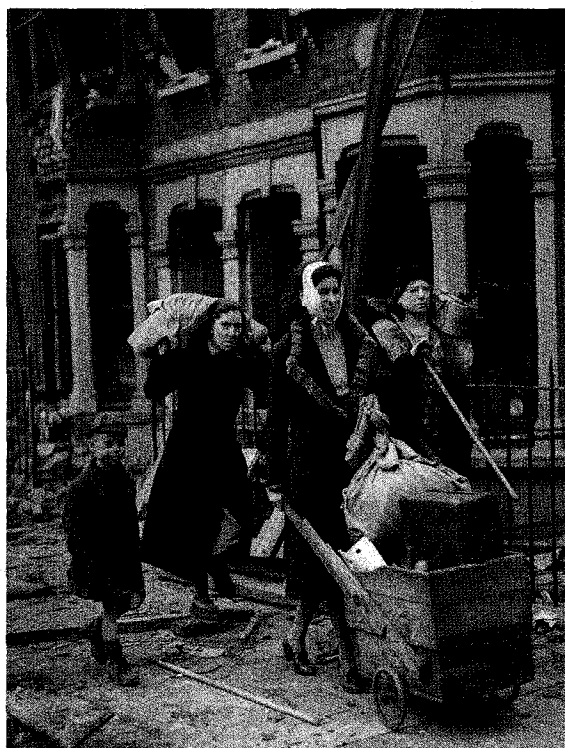
CIRCLES IN THE SKY: Traces of a dogfight over St. Paul's, 1940

HUTTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS

All night the Luftwaffe circled, pummeling the docklands and their adjacent working-class neighborhoods with high-explosive and incendiary bombs. London had never suffered such fires, even during the Great Fire of 1666. Those who witnessed that night would consistently recall how the sky glowed blood-red. For Londoners, “Black Saturday” began a test of endurance for which there was no precedent: the Blitz. The bombers would come back for 76 of the next 77 nights, and the Luftwaffe’s steady campaign against London would continue until the final and bloodiest attack of the Blitz, on May 10, 1941.

In *The First Day of the Blitz*, the Stanford historian Peter Stansky fluently chronicles the day’s events, placing them in the wider context of Britain’s home front and the history of the Blitz (only two of the book’s nine chapters actually focus on the narrow subject of its title). No matter how smooth his storytelling, though, this book can’t help but be largely superfluous. The reason the path of the Luftwaffe’s bombers can be traced literarily is that so many writers were scribbling away on the ground. After all, with the exception of Evelyn Waugh’s *Sword of Honour* trilogy, which encompasses both the London scene and various military misadventures, the best literature to emerge from the British experience in the Second World War concerns not the battlefield but London at war: Nicolson’s wartime diaries, Orwell’s *The Lion and the Unicorn* and columns for the *Tribune* and *Partisan Review*, Henry Green’s *Caught*, Graham Greene’s *Ministry of Fear* and *The End of the Affair*, Elizabeth Bowen’s wartime stories and *The Heat of the Day*, Waugh’s *Put Out More Flags*, Anthony Powell’s *The Valley of Bones*, *The Soldier’s Art*, and *The Military Philosophers*. Moreover, throughout the conflict hundreds of literate and well-spoken Londoners wrote vivid diaries and letters or were quoted in

interviews. Or their utterances and actions were secretly written down and assessed: officialdom, in its efforts to keep its citizens productive and healthy and to monitor their morale, collected information of unprecedented depth and range about their everyday lives. And since the war, beginning in 1950 with the pathbreaking sociologist Richard M. Titmuss’s *Problems of Social Policy*—a volume in Britain’s official history of the conflict and a tour de force whose



BOMBED-OUT East Londoners made homeless by German air raids

soporific title belies its often disturbing contents—historians have probed, revised, and re-revised nearly every aspect of this self-defined finest hour of the British people.

The upshot, as Angus Calder wrote in his seminal 1991 *The Myth of the Blitz*, is that “no archive of such abundance exists for any other ‘major event’ in British history.” (Calder’s biography proves his point: he’s the son of the journalist Ritchie Calder, author of *Carry On London*, perhaps the best-known of several contemporaneously published reports of the Blitz.) So it’s not surprising that,

like most Blitz books, Stansky’s retails timeworn anecdotes and quotes oft-quoted accounts. Most readers should probably turn instead to Philip Ziegler’s *London at War* or Constantine FitzGibbon’s classic *The Winter of the Bombs*, the two best general histories, which give as detailed a chronicle of Black Saturday as all but the Blitz-afflicted could desire, and which lack Stansky’s clumsy, jejune efforts to make the Blitz relevant to post-9/11 readers (“terror is frequently counterproductive and strengthens the resolve of those who are attacked”). Still, Stansky’s approach has its rewards. By focusing on the opening of the struggle, the book illuminates the ironies, paradoxes, and unintended consequences that marked the Blitz—and reminds us that those elements always lie at the heart of history.

To the British experiencing it, September 7 wasn’t the first day of the Blitz; it was the 60th day of the Battle of Britain—the struggle between the Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force for air supremacy over the Channel and southern Britain, which Germany needed in order to launch an invasion. By that day, the contest had entered its decisive period. As the Luftwaffe concentrated its assault on Fighter Command’s airfields and communications centers, the RAF was close to breaking.

Moreover, Germany had massed its troop-carrying barges across the Channel, and all intelligence pointed to an impending invasion—an event the British chiefs of staff assumed would be preceded by an intense air attack on London. As the Luftwaffe bombed the East End, the chiefs of staff meeting in Whitehall a few miles away focused on what they believed to be the immediate and dire implications of the assault. So they issued the ominous code word “Cromwell,” meaning that invasion was imminent and that troops should take up their battle stations. For soldiers and civilians in southeast

England, the dominant memory of that night was less the terrible glow in the western sky than the predawn explosions as the British blew up their own bridges to slow the anticipated German advance, and the almost medieval sound of church bells ringing the alarm over the countryside in the middle of the night.

The attack on London in fact marked a shift in Hitler's strategy, away from using the Luftwaffe to destroy Britain's air defenses directly—and that shift relieved Fighter Command of the unrelenting pressure and unsustainable losses it had borne. In retrospect, then, although Black Saturday signaled destruction and chaos for London, it quite possibly brought Britain's deliverance, as Hugh Dowding, the chief of Fighter Command, later recognized: "I could hardly believe the Germans would have made such a mistake ... it was a supernatural intervention ... [September 7] was really the crucial day."

On September 7, though, no one in Britain could have greeted the bombing of London as a miraculous release. The best minds in science, the military, the civil service, and the government (including the doughty prime minister) were certain that such an attack would be all but apocalyptic. Government planners had coolly reckoned that a German air assault would kill 58,000 Londoners in the first 24 hours, and kill 600,000 and wound 1.2 million in two months. At the onset of the war, the Ministry of Health secretly issued 1 million burial forms to local authorities; the Home Office projected that 20 million square feet of timber would be needed each month for coffins. Because that was unobtainable, London officials anticipated mass dumping of the dead in lime pits and in the Channel. No wonder that when war was declared the government urgently carried out what remains the largest internal migration in British history: the evacuation from London and other cities of schoolchildren and of toddlers and their mothers.

But soon after the all-clear sounded on the morning of September 8, it was obvious that the problems the Blitz

would create, though thorny and dangerous, were entirely different from those that had been predicted. On the 7th, 430 people had been killed and 1,600 seriously injured. On the 8th, the bombers would kill 400 more, and the next night another 370. By the end of the war, German bombs would kill 29,000 Londoners, nearly 20,000 of them during the Blitz. In all of Britain, 60,000 civilians would be killed (one-tenth the number of German civilians killed by the British and American air forces).

If authorities had wildly miscalculated the number of fatalities, they had correctly estimated the number of houses that bombs would render uninhabitable. For every person killed, 35 were "bombed out." One in six Londoners would be made homeless at some point during the Blitz; although few houses were destroyed, repairmen couldn't nearly keep up with the rate of damage. The greatest problem that confronted Londoners and the authorities charged with their welfare wasn't shelter from the bombs—the image of Tube stations crammed with plucky cockneys singing "Roll Out the Barrel" may dominate the public imagination, but in fact even at the height of the Blitz only one in seven Londoners used the public shelters—but homelessness. That the Luftwaffe concentrated its attacks for the first several days of the Blitz almost exclusively on the militarily legitimate target of the East End docklands enormously exacerbated the potentially disastrous consequences of homelessness. The poor and working-class neighborhoods there—dense, flimsily built, and badly governed—engendered tens of thousands of confused, angry, near-hysterical bombing victims. Every subsequent analysis confirms the government's internal intelligence assessment at the time: during the first week of the Blitz, parts of the East End came perilously close to a breakdown of public authority and to mass panic.

Once again, Germany's mercurial bombing strategy delivered the British. After six days, the Luftwaffe extended its range of targets to include the heavily

residential and prosperous West End. Although the Germans made the change in part to intensify the coercion of the city's population, its effect was exactly the opposite. The shift somewhat relieved the East End from intense bombing, which bought the authorities time to establish systems to aid the bombed-out. More important, the Germans mended the socially corrosive rift their initial strategy had (unintentionally, if usefully) created between London's poor and bombed and its rich and safe. As Clement Attlee, the deputy prime minister and Labour Party leader, told Nicolson, "If only the Germans had had the sense not to bomb west of London Bridge there might have been a revolution in this country." After Buckingham Palace was bombed on September 13, the queen declared: "I'm glad we've been bombed. Now I feel we can look the East End in the face."

In his conclusion, Stansky slips into well-worn grooves. The Blitz, he maintains, is "a major modern example of terror failing to alter a nation's actions," and he attributes Londoners' "united heroism" to a no-fuss, understated English emphasis on getting on with the job and "coping" and to "a tradition of participatory democracy that ... enabled the populace to deal with the situation created by the heavy bombing." The British undoubtedly possessed the admirable characteristics Stansky ascribes to them (and which they frequently ascribed to themselves). Although the sustained attack on a great and civilized city provided ample scope for cowardice, selfishness, criminality, and fecklessness, by and large the British bore their burden with astonishing decency. But the people of Berlin and Hamburg, Stalingrad, and Tokyo—none citizens of a "participatory democracy"—all remained united and resolved and never gave in to "terror," even as they withstood bombing on a vastly more terrible scale. If trite conclusions must be drawn, they might be about the relative unimportance of ideology—no matter how uplifting—in the face of extreme duress. ▀

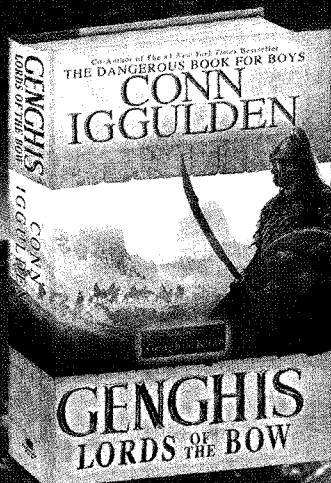
Benjamin Schwarz is The Atlantic's literary editor and national editor.

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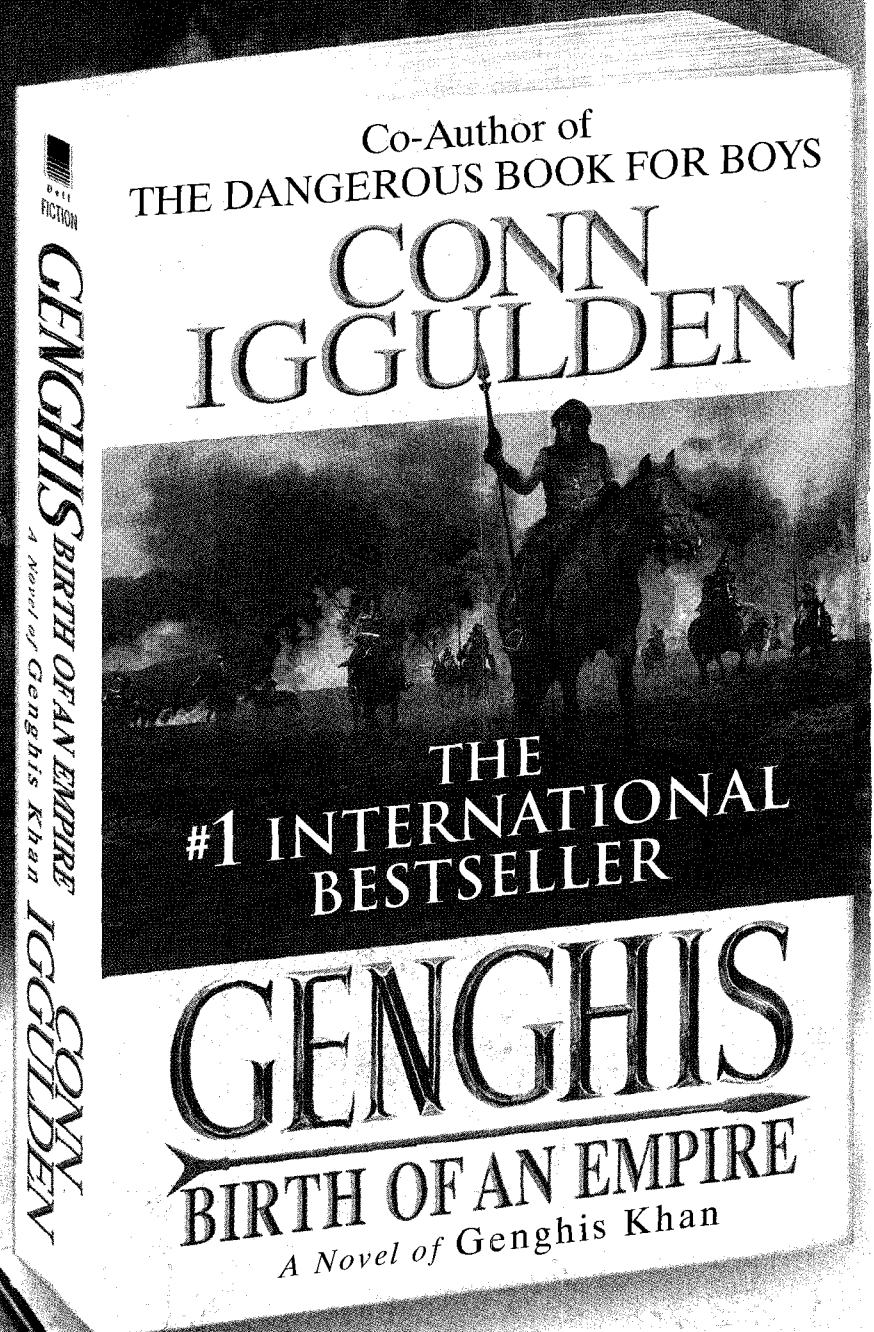
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BOOKS

Through sheer force of will, Hollywood's most infamous single mother constructed a persona seductive, repellent, and almost impossible not to watch.

'I Am Joan Crawford'

BY THOMAS MALLON

Like many of her awful but absorbing movies, this new biography of Joan Crawford (1908?–1977) begins at the end of the story, before flashing back to *Reveal All*. *Not the Girl Next Door* opens with an interview that Charlotte Chandler, the author, once conducted in Crawford's New York apartment ("I sat on the sofa after she removed its plastic cover") with the retired and aging star. The actress speaks in the noble *Photoplay* tones ("I wouldn't change anything for fear of changing it all") that were always a large part of Crawford's stiff public image, until it was toppled like a dictator's statue by her adopted daughter's poisonous memoir, *Mommie Dearest*.

No matter how many eponymous films she made (*Mildred Pierce*, *Daisy Kenyon*, *Harriet Craig*), Crawford never seemed to be anyone but Joan Crawford, and no matter how often she was *Chained*, *Paid*, *Possessed*, or *Berserk*, she always appeared grotesquely in control of herself and her onscreen circumstances. Crawford's was a life less lived than produced, a joint venture undertaken by herself and MGM, and though it's been much better recounted in previous biographies (one by Bob Thomas, another by Lawrence J. Quirk and William Schoell), the chance to gawk at its sad closing and then work backward, peeling off the layers of metallic maquilage, remains a sordid thrill.

So let's cue the Franz Waxman score and fade back to Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1908 (maybe), where we'll find Crawford's mother, Anna Bell Johnson LeSueur, tearfully enduring abandonment by the father of her infant daughter, Lucille. As the girl grows up, she will often get hit for misbehavior committed



JOAN CRAWFORD, in 1959

by her more favored brother, but a stepfather, Henry "Billy" Cassin, will come along and prove to be, according to Chandler, a "caring, attentive" parent to "little Lucille." Cassin owns a local opera house and encourages his stepdaughter in her dreams of dancing. But he's put on trial for embezzlement—if only Lucille hadn't

found those gold coins in the basement!—and, though acquitted, has to move his family to Kansas City. Soon after, he too disappears, leaving Anna to operate a laundry whose terrible smells will cling to Lucille's memory for years. The young woman waits tables and makes beds to earn her keep at two different boarding

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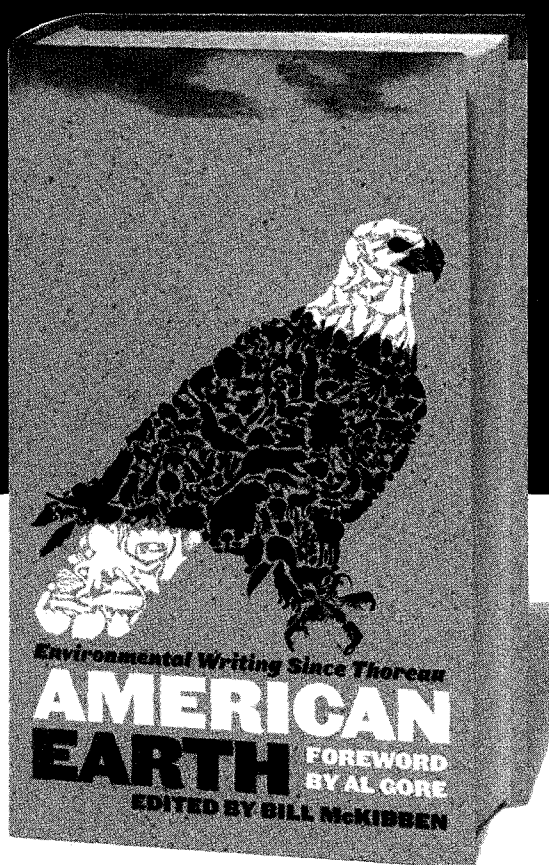


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schools and then briefly at Stephens College, from which she runs away when her work-study status leads to rejection by a sorority. "I was not a Method actress," the screen goddess explained, with rare understatement, decades later. But she would admit that when filming a painful scene, she did occasionally tap into memories of her own hard early life.

Dance contests, chorus jobs, and a screen test brought her to Hollywood and silent films, most notably *Our Dancing Daughters* (1928). MGM, a late-comer to sound, liked her deep voice and put her in nearly a dozen talkies before *Grand Hotel* (1932) made "Joan Crawford" a star. *Preparation* and *discipline* were her watchwords. She had no great gifts, but was smart enough to learn anything that directors like Clarence Brown and Howard Hawks and George Cukor could teach her. When she wanted to buy a house, she borrowed not from the bank but from the studio: "As long as I owe them money," Crawford reasoned to her first husband, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., "they can't very well let me go." She never wasted anyone's time on the sets, which she asked be kept at a concentration-producing 55 degrees. Louis B. Mayer loaned her out just three times in 18 years.

Onscreen, Crawford's face was an Art Deco masterpiece—jutting chromium cheekbones, gargoyle eyebrows—as fabulous as the Chrysler Building and scarcely more human. It was a construction designed for the lens, not life. Of all the great stars, she is the one whose mature visage is least imaginable from her early photographs and films. Like that later Hollywood striver, Nancy Davis Reagan, her head was too large for her body—except for the shoulders, which Gilbert Adrian had the wit to pad instead of disguise when he dressed her for *Letty Lynton* (1932). Fantastically strong-willed, Crawford would shed weight, drop mannerisms, even change her natural laugh: "It grew softer, more modulated, less spontaneous," Fairbanks remembered. "It became a finishing-school laugh."

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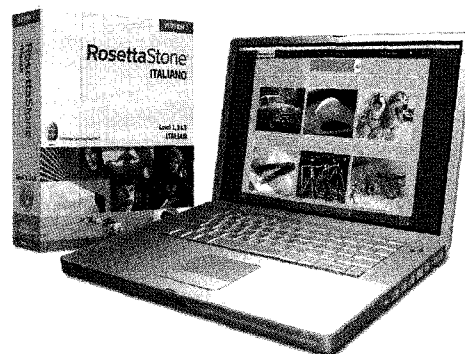
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George Cukor, who directed Crawford in *The Women* (1939), understood that the “camera saw a side of her that no flesh-and-blood lover ever saw.” It’s a truism that every film star knows how to make love to the camera; in Crawford’s case, it was more like an insistence on penetration. “As the camera came in closer,” Cukor explained, “she had an expression on her face of wanting it intensely. She glowed from within. Her skin came to life. Her head fell back. Her lips parted. Her eyes were glistening. It was utterly sensual, erotic. Her close-up was ecstasy.” Vincent Sherman, who directed her three times at the beginning of the 1950s, tells how she came on to him in a screening room when the two of them were running *Humoresque* (1946) to get hairstyle ideas for *The Damned Don’t Cry*: “I came to believe that she had been aroused by her own eroticized image on the screen ... that she had been more excited by herself than by me.” Some of Crawford’s most intense love scenes feel like libidinal nightmares. It’s difficult to think of a more sexually repellent star, of any other actress creating such feelings of guilt and inadequacy in the male viewer—who remained helplessly aware of a thought he couldn’t voice in the darkened theater: *I am not a camera!*

Crawford’s overstated performances, often intelligent but almost never instinctive, remain garishly earthbound. In *Possessed* (1947), she plays schizophrenia with flaring eyes and fists to the temples, as if it were an Excedrin headache, and in *Humoresque* she listens to John Garfield’s violin-playing as if she were trying to show off her cultivation to Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Sr. during another uneasy dinner party at Pickfair. There is something different about her in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), for which she won and maybe even deserved her single Oscar; something understated, felt—a premonition, perhaps, that her nasty real-life daughter would one day assault her with far worse stuff than Ann Blyth ever dished out onscreen.

Crawford craved appreciation of her talents, but she was less an actress than a kind of performance artist, an obsessive

24/7 movie star who took the job to an ethereal extreme where narcissism shades into something like humility. She was famous for answering every piece of fan mail, sometimes in one of the special “dresses I wear for doing my correspondence.” She would identify herself to telephone operators (“Hello, dear. This is Joan Crawford. What is the number for the Hollywood Roosevelt?”) and had to explain to Franchot Tone, her second husband, that fans and photographers were always present wherever the couple went because she tipped them off herself. Late in life, living at the Imperial House in Manhattan, she

dressed up “even to throw out the garbage,” because she thought she owed it to the doorman to look like Joan Crawford. When at the end she began to photograph badly, she stopped going out.

Her long feud with Bette Davis, cherished by drag performers, was certainly camp (“Bette is a survivor,” said Crawford. “She survived herself”), but it was rooted in something more fundamental than their rumored competition for Tone back in the mid-1930s. The far less glamorous Davis, despite her own egomania and madness for recognition, found stardom essentially ridiculous. She preferred bouquets from critics to ones tossed by fans, and thought the whole offscreen Crawford persona humorless and phony. Crawford was sufficiently shrewd about box office to approach Davis with the idea of their doing *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*—but only if she herself could play Blanche, the lovely forbearing invalid. Davis, happy to let go of vanity and take the more monstrous and much meatier part, wound up mocking her co-star in interviews: “I would never have accepted anything *but* Baby Jane ... Miss Crawford was more concerned with the positioning of her falsies.”

Crawford’s relations with men were avidly physical but for the most part non-tempestuous, love being a small thing compared to career and image. Her move in 1943 from MGM to Warner

Brothers was far more personally momentous than any transition from one husband to another. The union with Fairbanks would collapse politely once her self-improvement efforts really took off (“He married a chorus girl, and I think that’s what he liked”). Their delayed European honeymoon had been paid for by MGM, but she couldn’t relax away from the studio. Back home, Crawford saw in Betty Barker, a teenage girl badly smitten with Fairbanks, not a threat but the prospect of hired help; she set Barker to work addressing envelopes. Her second divorce was as friendly as the first, and decades after

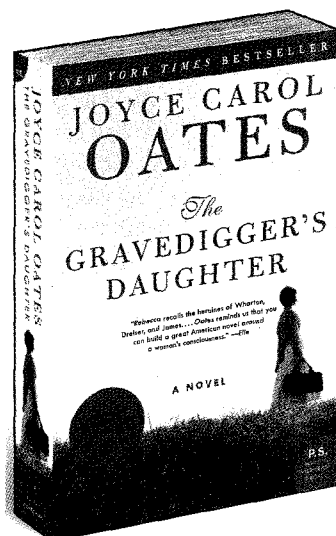
it, when Franchot Tone was in a wheelchair and living nearby in New York, Crawford would help with his bills and sometimes cook him dinner.

During their marriage, Crawford had experienced a number of miscarriages, and when it was over, she felt a stronger desire for children than for husbands. So she had a lawyer make the arrangements that would eventually establish her as the most infamous single mother in history. There was a certain Neverland Ranch quality to the elaborate birthday parties she threw for little Christina and Christopher, whose good fortune was displayed to Crawford’s public in magazines and on the radio, but it’s impossible to know how hard and how often, if ever, the star’s wire hanger rained blows upon the children once the guests had gone home. Crawford didn’t live to see the publication—and, worse, the filming—of *Mommie Dearest*, but she has had numerous defenders in the years since, and her new biographer is firmly in the pro-Joan, anti-Christina camp. Chandler offers testimony from friends and family that the daughter had always been impossible, and her brother even worse. Myrna Loy, speaking of Christina, once told Lawrence J. Quirk: “Believe me, there were many times I wanted to smack her myself.”

Chandler’s idea of retributive justice is to overaccentuate anything positive about her subject. She creates a fanzine

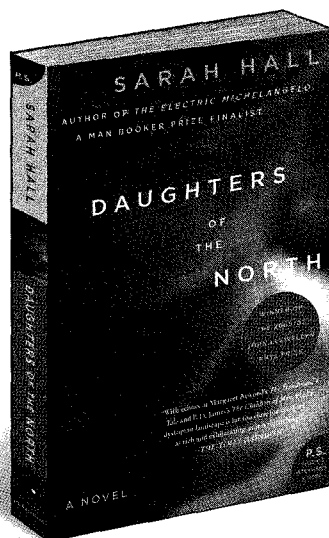
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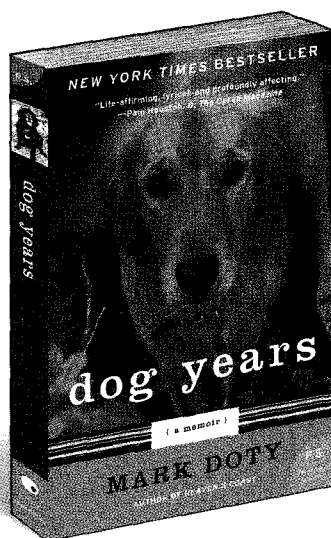


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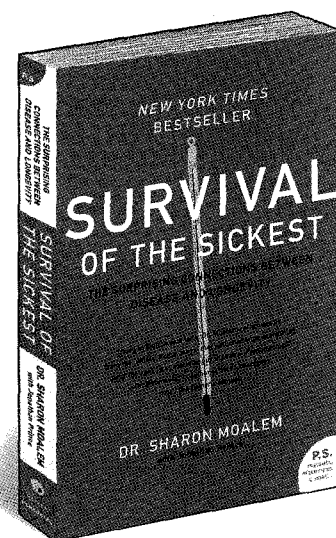
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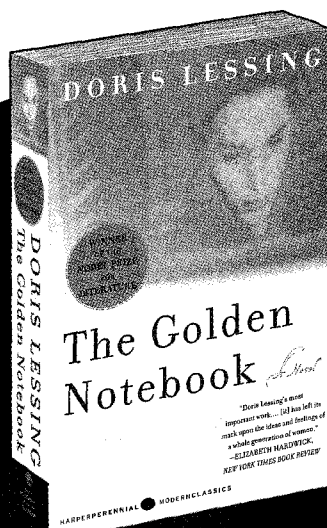


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Saint Joan ("She felt it was selfish to have household help during World War II, when there was a labor shortage"), but that's the least of this book's flaws. Quotations are flung upon the page with no hint of a source or date, and long, inane plot summaries of Crawford's films pad the text more outrageously than Adrian ever filled out the star's shoulders. Almost everything else is underdeveloped, devoid of context, and badly located, as if the biographer were some incompetent prop mistress, misplacing all the glamorous clutter from the life of her subject, who, it's fair to say, would have hated this book for its sloppiness.

In *The Damned Don't Cry* (1950), Crawford's fierce character sets straight a timid accountant in the backseat of a cab: "Don't talk to me about self-respect," she orders. "That's something you tell yourself you got when you got nothing else." In fact, Crawford had plenty of it herself, but that was no reason not to go after all the other things available. She got most of what she wanted and attained a kind of cheesy greatness through unrelenting effort and a whole lot of worry. She supposedly overcame the latter when, late in life, she embraced Christian Science. If she were arriving in Hollywood today, she'd probably be checking out Scientology's Celebrity Centre as soon as she got off the plane, shedding all the negative energy and Suppressive Persons in the manner of TomKat and Travolta.

Movie-magazine readers chose her screen name in a 1925 contest; thus was she market-researched into existence. She disliked "Joan Crawford" at first, but as she grew herself into it changed her mind: "My fans write to 'Dear Miss Crawford' or 'Dear Joan.' These are wonderful words ... I *am* Joan Crawford." Rarely was she more affecting than in the *Baby Jane* scene requiring wheelchair-bound Blanche, a faded film star, to watch one of her old movies on television. The picture chosen for Crawford to look at was *Sadie McKee*, which she'd filmed in 1934; her rapt appreciation, 30 years later, made for the easiest take of the day. ▀

Thomas Mallon's most recent novel, *Fellow Travelers*, will be published in paperback by Vintage in May.

BOOKS

An English critic decries the decline of his language—and his civilization.

Keeping a Civil Tongue

BY B. R. MYERS

A recent article in the travel section of *The New York Times* began as follows:

It may be the ugliest, most dangerous city you'll ever love. Gray high-rises stretch to the horizon, graffiti blankets downtown, where those who can afford it drive bulletproof cars ... But São Paulo, Brazil's biggest and most modern city, also has plenty of flair. Sip *caipirinhas* at a glamorous bar surrounded by the city's upper crust, accessorized with \$10,000 Panerai watches on one arm and a fashion model on the other. Shop at obscenely luxurious stores like Daslu, a boutique so exclusive that customers often arrive by helicopter. Or sit in a cafe on Oscar Freire Street and watch the rich and the beautiful pass by.

This is not just the worldview of Madison Avenue but its style and tone as well. Note how “flair” is treated as something any brand-conscious fool can buy, while *obsценely* serves much the same function as *sinful* in chocolate-cake-mix commercials. Even *exclusive* is used in its ad-copy sense.

This bouncy, valueless style appears to be spreading. Many readers are already so at home in it that other voices tend to rub them the wrong way. (An increasingly common response to earnest argument, as a visit to the blogosphere will confirm, is not to disagree at any length, but to jeer the arguer for getting worked up.) Our language itself is losing its power to express moral disapproval. *Obscene* and *sinful* are headed the way of *decadent* and *outrageous*; perhaps *depraved* will be watered down next.

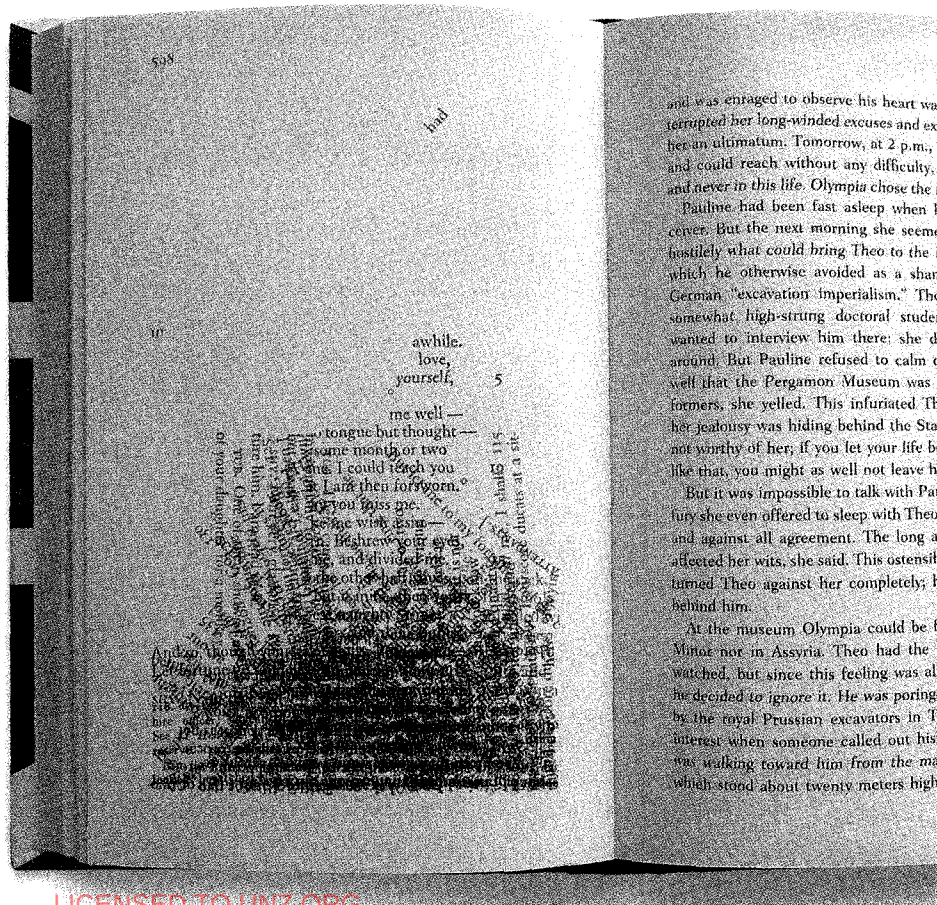
Such changes affect the way we think, because we do so in words. This is why Karl Kraus, the founder of modern *Sprachkritik*, or “criticism of language,” was so hard on the Viennese press of the

1920s and 1930s. He is alleged to have said that “if those who are obliged to look after commas had made sure they are always in the right place,” the Japanese would not have set Shanghai on fire. I’m not sure I’d go that far, but the *New York Times* article speaks for itself. People who cannot distinguish between good and bad language, or who regard the distinction as unimportant, are unlikely to think carefully about anything else.

The same goes for nations in general. “Decline of language is the decline of the life of the people who use it.” The quote is from the British literary scholar Ian Robinson, the Anglophone world’s fore-

most critic of language. In his first book, published in 1973, he surveyed everything from women’s magazines to love poetry, and found it reflective of a Britain in moral and cultural decay. Although this may sound like gloomy reading, *The Survival of English* is one of the most entertaining books on language ever written. Its demolition of *The New English Bible* is especially good. (“In poetry the [NEB] keeps launching off into the sidetracks of metre before bumping back on to the motorway of journalistic prose.”) In a chapter on British newspapers, Robinson takes aim at “that compound of indulgent contempt and failure

UNTIED
KINGDOM
by Ian Robinson
Brynmill Press



to argue which is our modern enlightenment's habitual response to criticism." As an example, he cites the London *Times's* defense of its own modernization (read: vulgarization):

"There are a few of our readers, particularly those who have read The Times for a very long while, for whom all changes seem equally unwelcome; to them we can only offer our understanding.' That contrives to suggest, without exposing the suggestion to argument, that everyone who doesn't like the changes is a) unreasonably averse to any change whatsoever, b) an insignificant minority and c) since they are in their dotage in need of d) being humored.

The Survival of English was generally well reviewed; even a hostile 24-year-old critic named Martin Amis was moved to concede that Robinson's chapters on political rhetoric and journalism were "thrilling pages, elegant, witty and surely argued." Had Robinson followed this initial success with a popular-oriented book, perhaps giving more play

"why this truly cultivated author is so little known." The question answers itself.

Robinson is a conservative Christian, but one doesn't have to be religious to know the feeling aroused in him by popular culture that "if this is the world, I live somewhere else." I felt the same way the other day while watching *Little Miss Sunshine* on DVD. Much honored by award committees (always a bad sign), the film invites us to chuckle fondly at a foul-mouthed heroin addict who teaches his little granddaughter a mock striptease. And yet the only people who actually object to this sort of thing are the religious right. We of non-faith either applaud the "pushing of the envelope" or look the other way; it's just culture, after all. It seems to me, then, that when Robinson writes in his new book of a nation that has "lost its mind, a state that prevents it from taking *anything* seriously"—of an "auto-destruction of thinking" that he calls "The Misery"—he could just as easily be talking of America. *Untied Kingdom*, as this bold and eloquent book is called, diagnoses The

he lamented the loss of Britain's unique identity. Insisting on the distinction between a multiracial community and a multicultural one, Robinson asks how the latter can be a true community at all, especially when some cultures in the mix are themselves "anti-multicultural." He writes scathingly of the ruling party's failure to grasp that Islam and the English way of life are mutually exclusive value systems. In 2006, Jack Straw, a Labour politician, blithely called on Muslim women to abandon their veils. Robinson:

He did not tell us whether any of the Muslim ladies asked him to remove his trousers, which would have been the obvious retort, for to some Muslim women the veil is just part of womanly modesty. It was argued that veiled women cannot show their facial expression. But equally, Mr Straw cannot show the no doubt quite expressive state of his genitals ... He does seem to think that all the immigrant groups are English really.

We Americans shouldn't feel too complacent about the relative success of our melting pot, which has never had to melt down such an enormous chunk from the Islamic world. Nor do we take the words *e pluribus unum* as seriously as we used to. The many immigrants who now refuse to learn more than a little transactional English are in effect saying that an economic community is all they want to be part of. We are told not to worry: these new citizens will boost our own prosperity too. So what if we can't talk to each other? Americanness, which once meant so much that only a shared language could carry it all, is contracting to a mere matter of wanting a bigger income—or should I say more "flair"? The obvious irony is that a nation without one unifying language will end up poorer in economic terms as well.

"A healthily-working civilization," Robinson wrote in *The Survival of English*,

generates its standards and values at its centres and they are then lived and modified into commonsense by all its people. At present the situation often seems to have been reversed, with the centres restrained

People who cannot distinguish between good and bad language are unlikely to think carefully about anything else.

to his sense of humor, he might have gained enough of an audience to start changing things. But believing instead that meaningful change can come only from the "clerisy," or educated elite, he has spent most of the past few decades trying to talk sense into British universities, and their English departments in particular. Deconstruction, political correctness, "new historicism": Robinson has argued persuasively—often in the excellent journal *Words in Edgeways*—against these and other contemporary orthodoxies. Unfortunately, the same triumph of the half-educated that he criticizes has prevented his work from exerting much influence. When his history of English criticism was published (*The English Prophets*, 2001), a reviewer wondered

Misery in all areas of British life, while calling on the remnants of the country's educated to restore thoughtful judgment. The author doesn't mind being called a reactionary, and says readers shouldn't mind, either: "There is no need to accept that the word *modernize* as used by [political] leaders ... has any meaning beyond drifting with the stream."

The Misery is for Robinson inextricable from the spread of careless language. In Britain as in America, for example, the words *race* and *culture* are so often misused as to have become almost interchangeable (a British newspaper headline: "Blunkett in Race Row Over Culture Tests"). Britons who oppose mass immigration are thus accused of racism, as the pop singer Morrissey was last year when

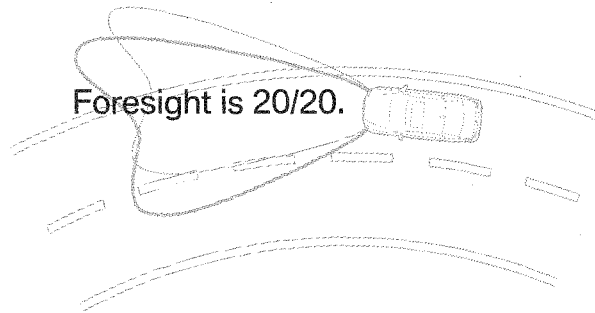
from utter madness and breakdown only by commonsense.

Untied Kingdom deals with some of the centers in question. One is British fiction, the tone of which, Robinson asserts, is now set by Martin Amis. I would have preferred to read in detail about a less obviously bad novel than *Yellow Dog*, but Robinson's appraisal of the novelist's work is sound enough. It is applicable to some American writers too:

A certain dreariness overtakes the consistent, relentless cleverness. The insistent drawing of attention to itself on the part of the style, the lack of sympathy for any of the characters, the action set in a subhuman life without morality or belief, gets more and more tedious as the pages stretch out the same formulae ... Amis's stories remain inert, the characters nagged at by the Jamesian precision of phrasing which yet does nothing to bring them to life.

When a conservative Christian laments the absence of morality in a novel, one may well assume that he wants Christian moralizing, but Robinson's favorite writer is D. H. Lawrence, hardly a Bible-thumper. What he does expect from a literary novelist is a strong interest in the moral significance of life. He finds more of this in Nick Hornby than in Amis, but still not enough: "The contemporary English novel is a great bore because morally shallow."

My main complaint with Robinson's treatment of contemporary British fiction, and of literary criticism and the British press, is that it is too short. Enough has changed in the 35 years since *The Survival of English* to merit another lengthy discussion of written language. Here Robinson casts his nets a little too widely. There is indeed a great English tradition of literary scholars—"prophets," Robinson calls them—passing general comment on culture, but it is more difficult to do this now than it was in Matthew Arnold's day. Criticizing pop and rock music, for example, requires a little more research than Robinson seems able to stomach. He is certainly right to



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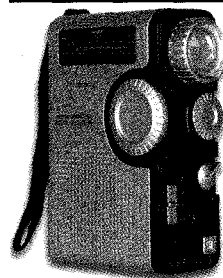
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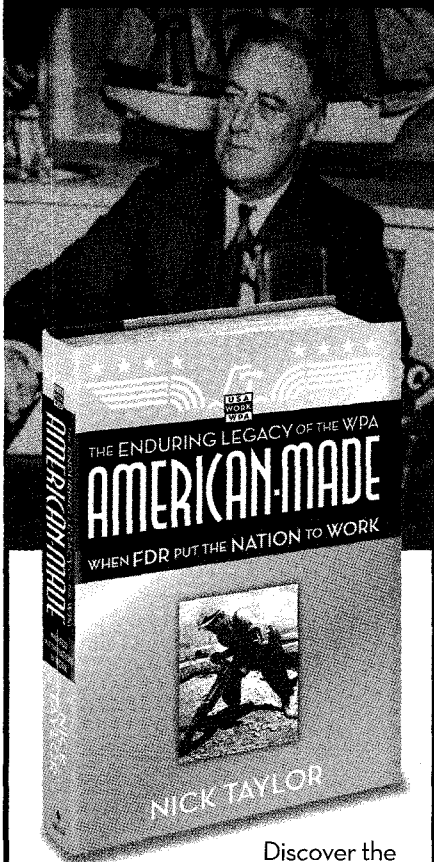
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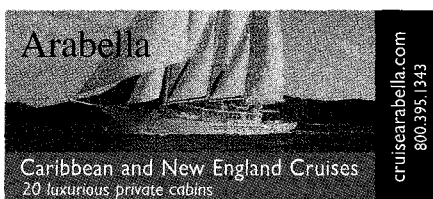
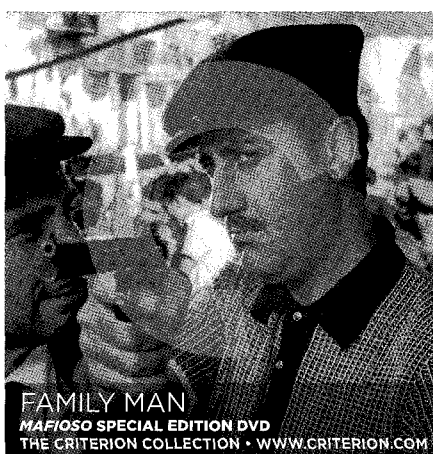
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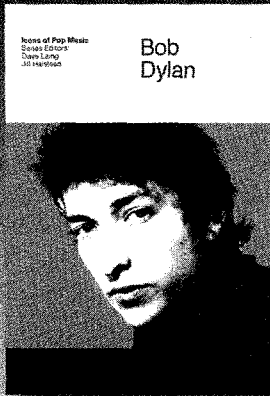


point out the sheer inescapability of the stuff: a North Korean can block out the personality cult more easily than a Western prole can get through the day without some millionaire "rebel" shouting in his ear. (The ring tones will get him if nothing else does.) But to prove a lack of standards in pop lyrics, one would have to instance a more respected song than "Goodbye England's Rose," that now-forgotten elegy to Lady Di; nor do Marilyn Manson's avowals of evil, which Robinson lets himself be baited by, reflect anyone's morals but the singer's own—if those.

I know that *Untied Kingdom* was written as "an epistle to the English," and that if anything is ruder than reading other people's mail, it's finding fault with the contents. I also understand that although few Englishmen go to church, Christianity is more central to England's cultural tradition than to America's. All the same, I wish Robinson had made a little less of his faith in this book. In both our countries, the materialist left and the money-mad right unite in telling us that the whole point of national life is economic growth. Our academic elites, for their part, still spout the deconstructionist line that words mean whatever we like, hence no form of expression is better than another. (They don't actually *believe* this; any professor who argued that "nappy-headed hos" was but a launchpad for playful imaginings would have lost his job faster than Don Imus himself.) Those of us who regard language and culture as great potential forces for good should be looking for common ground from which to fight back, instead of gratuitously annoying each other. And it *is* gratuitous to assert, in such a book as this, that morality is impossible without faith in Jesus; the Christian reader does not need to be told, and the non-Christian rolls his eyes.

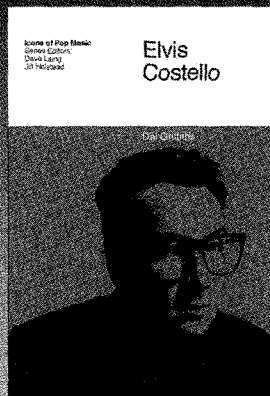
Robinson's criticism of homosexuality seems pointless for much the same reason. Like him, I believe that Christians—and Muslims, for that matter—have the right to call homosexuality a sin; it is not as if they use a nicer word for what we straight nonbelievers get up to. But if they want to argue from their castle of faith, they should stay there, and not

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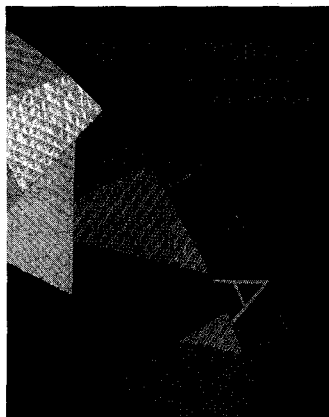
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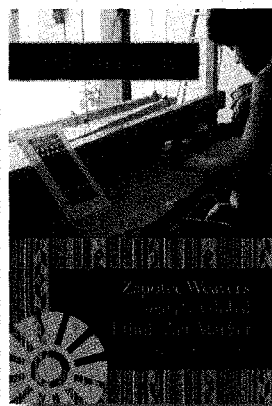
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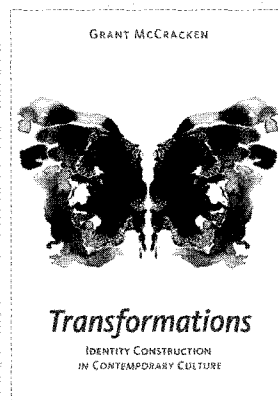
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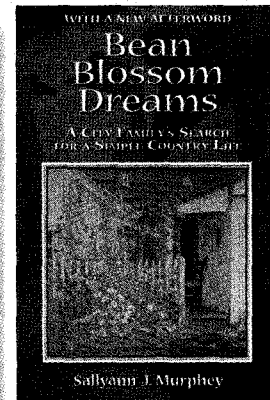
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keep popping out for what they think are appeals to common sense. "The [homosexuals] I have known tend towards melancholy, and for very good reasons." I was running my eyes down the page while recalling the gays I know, most of them quite cheerful people, when the drawbridge swung up again: "If called upon to defend tradition, I just appeal to the authority of revelation." That should have been said in the preface, which in its present form leads one to expect a different kind of book.

Of course, the author has every right to go on restricting his readership. (Prophets are always choosy about their followers; Jesus spoke in parables so the multitude would *not* be saved.) I hope Robinson can at least be prevailed upon to go back to the sort of work he undertook so magnificently in *The Survival of English* and for which he remains uniquely well qualified. There are many things believers and nonbelievers will never agree on, but when it warns against slovenly language, the voice of faith sounds to this heathen ear a lot like the voice of reason. I would certainly rather pin my colors to "Be not seduced: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33) than sit through another of the new "romantic" comedies in which every third word is *fuck*.

I would also rather join the reactionaries than those who want to reduce the printed sentence to an elongated Rorschach blot. In a *Harper's* cover article in 2005, Ben Marcus, the chair of the creative-writing program at Columbia University, called for a literature "free of coherence, so much more interested in forging complex bursts of meaning that are ... enigmatic rather than earthly." The unthinking choice of *forging* is typical; much as our postmodern friends like to promise rich ambiguities beyond our conceiving, their own minds run on rails. But like our politicians, they recognize the importance of coherent English, if only as an obstacle to their career aspirations. These meaning-forgers are everywhere. Be not seduced. ▀

B. R. Myers is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and the author of *A Reader's Manifesto* (2002).

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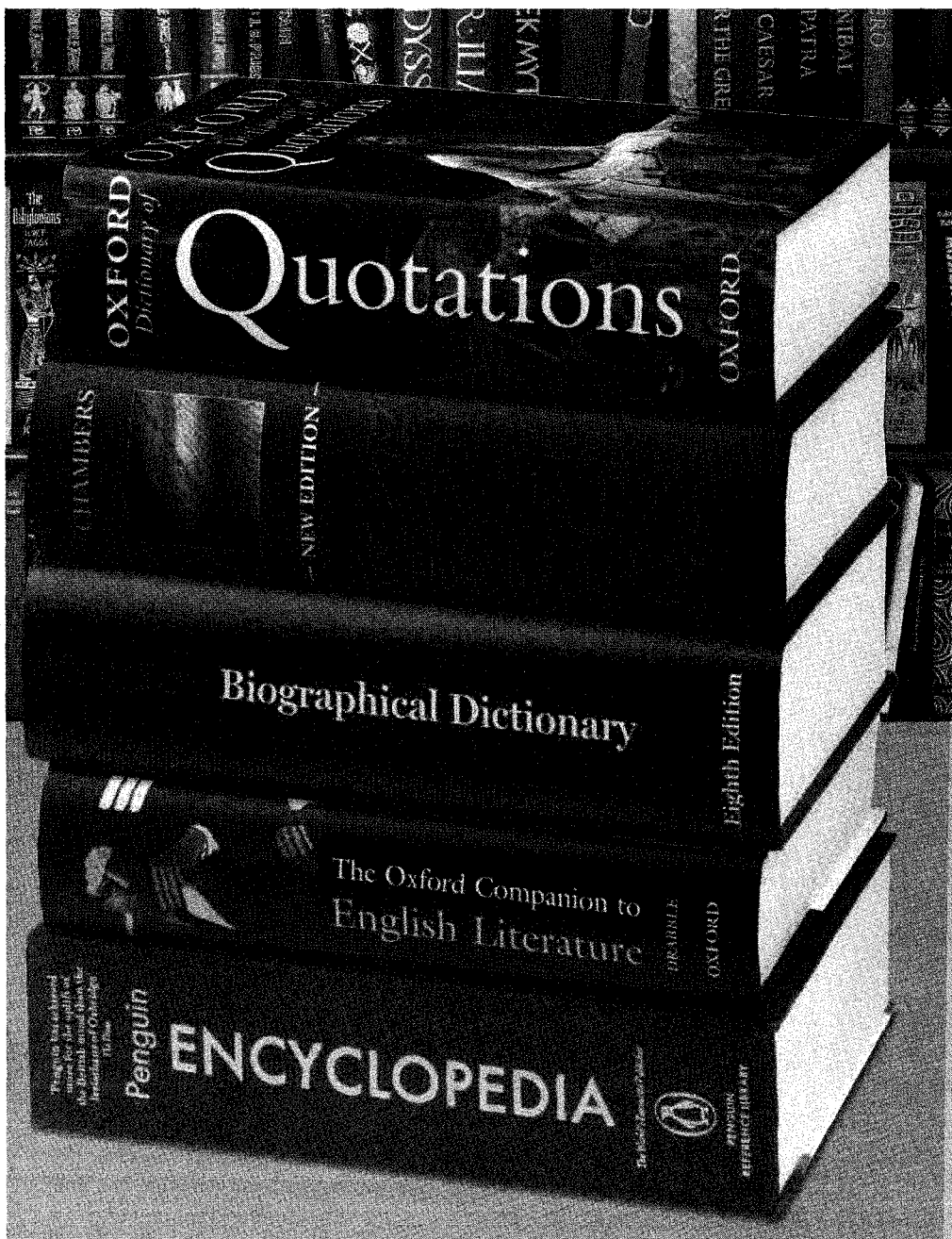
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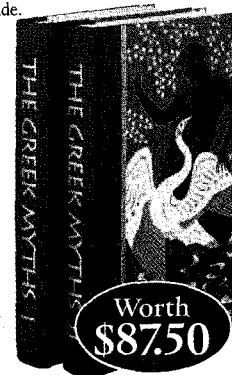
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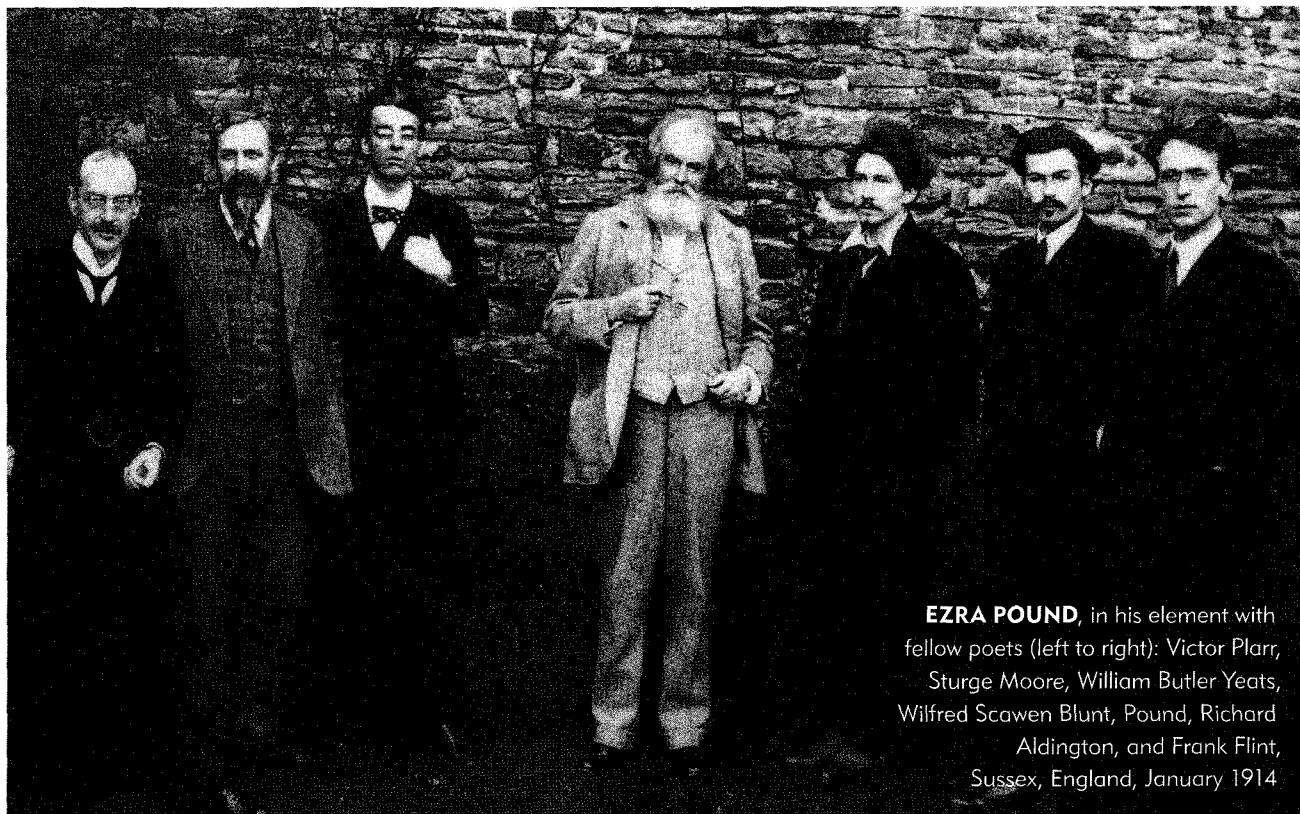
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EZRA POUND, in his element with fellow poets (left to right): Victor Plarr, Sturge Moore, William Butler Yeats, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, Pound, Richard Aldington, and Frank Flint, Sussex, England, January 1914

BOOKS

A new account of Ezra Pound's early years reveals his volatile genius—and prefigures the madness that would claim him.

A Revolutionary Simpleton

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The imposing first volume of A. David Moody's biography of Ezra Pound, which takes us up to the publication of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" and the writing of the early *Cantos*, deserves to stand in its own right as a study of Pound's germinal years. But no sooner has one written the word *germinal* than one begins to experience the desire to peep ahead at the ending or, rather, to look in the beginnings for symptoms of the terminus. I found myself doing this even with the very impressive photographs that Moody has collected. In most of them, Pound looks like a highly well-made young man, with an ironic and quizzical expression. He's especially dashing

in an extraordinary group shot taken in January 1914, where he stands in a cluster of talent (which includes W. B. Yeats and Richard Aldington) around the patriarchal figure of Wilfred Scawen Blunt. There's no apparent sign of the obsessive crank of the declining years, barking obscenities and gibberish over Mussolini's radio. Yet on the cover of the book, and reproduced inside, is a 1910 study from Paris, in which Pound confronts the camera with a hunched, autistic, haunted look, with a tinge of van Gogh to it.

Pound's early life story is in some respects not unlike that of T. S. Eliot, the man who in his dedication to *The Waste Land* called Pound "*il miglior fabbro*" (which can mean either "the better writer" or "the better craftsman"). They shared the same desire to escape from provincial gentility in America to Europe and perhaps especially to England, the same struggle to convince parents and family that the effort was one worth endorsing and financing, the same quixotic belief that poetry could be made to yield a living and that poets were

EZRA POUND: POET
A Portrait of the
Man & His Work
Volume I:
The Young Genius
1885–1920
by A. David Moody
Oxford

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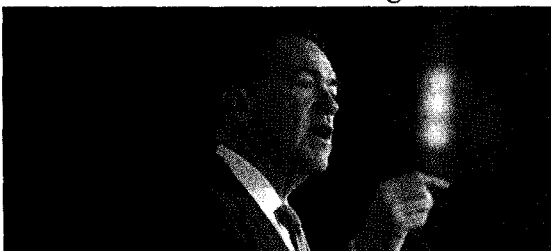
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MONDAY, 12.03.07

The Huckabee Surge



COMMENT

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee is within striking distance of winning Iowa, and his numbers are growing fast nationwide.

After being laughed off as a fourth-tier candidate, it is increasingly clear that the obesity-fighting Arkansan really can win the Republican nomination. Christian conservatives are making a decisive break with their self-appointed leaders, who've put political expediency over principle, and the result is a profoundly uncertain state of play that could result in any one of the five leading contenders—Romney, Giuliani, Huckabee, McCain, or Thompson—coming out on top. But Huckabee is the only candidate to have generated genuine grassroots enthusiasm thus far ... —REIHAN SALAM

ATLANTIC CONTENT

Marc Ambinder
12/03 2:35 p.m.
Huckabee To Address
Hundreds Of Pastors In
Des Moines

Andrew Sullivan
12/03 1:28 p.m.
Huckabee, Obama,
"Right" and "Left"

Ross Douthat
12/03 11:10 a.m.
McCain-Huckabee '08

Joshua Green
12/03 10:43 a.m.
The New War Over
Wal-Mart

BEST OPINION

Frightening Bob Novak has brought out the big guns against Huckabee, calling him a "false conservative" and a "frightening problem" for conservatives. For Novak, the key problem is that evangelicals are backing one of their own even though he doesn't fit the Goldwater-Reagan mold.	A Normal Person But as David Brooks argued back in October, perhaps the most compelling thing about Huckabee is that he is "the most normal person running for president." It's not just religion: with his modest background, Huckabee represents the new, more working-class GOP.	Too Christian The hawks at Power Line have found a new line of attack against Huckabee—it's not that he's not conservative; it's that he's not tough enough to fight terrorism. As a devout Christian, Huckabee can't be trusted to use water-boarding.	Rudy's Best Friend But Giuliani fans can find some consolation in Huckabee's rise. As Helen Kennedy notes, anything that hurts Romney helps Rudy, and that includes "Huckmania."
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MORE OPINION

Paul Krugman: *The New York Times* | Collin Levy: *The Wall Street Journal* | Hendrik Herzberg: *The New Yorker* | Glenn Reynolds: *Instapundit* | Will Saletan: *Slate* | George Will: *The Washington Post*

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a special class, and the same register of annihilating shock when in the summer of 1914 the roof of the over-admired European civilization simply fell in.

It is always impressive to read of the sheer dedication and conviction with which Pound approached poetry, and of the immense hopes he entertained for its regenerative powers. In a single season between 1912 and 1913 in London, we find him taking up the Bengali master Rabindranath Tagore and advising the Irish genius Yeats. Moody writes:

The measures, melodies and modulations of the songs in their original Bengali, which he had Tagore sing and explain to him, interested him as a seeker after 'fundamental laws in word music'; and seemed to correspond to the sort of metric he was working for in English. He went on to wax enthusiastic about the prospect of Bengali culture providing 'the balance and corrective' to a Western humanism which had lost touch with 'the whole and the flowing'. 'We have found our new Greece', he declared. 'In the midst of our clangor of mechanisms'.

In time, Pound's work would become a mechanical attempt to make poetry do what economics could not.

But within a short time he had tired of all this wholeness and flowing, and suspected Tagore of being just another "theosophist," and was sitting up late with Yeats to help revise "The Two Kings" line by line. Yeats was urged to purge his verses of their "Miltonic generalizations," and he told Lady Gregory that Pound helped him

to get back to the definite and the concrete away from modern abstractions. To talk over a poem with him is like getting you to put a sentence into dialect. All becomes clear and natural.

It must be reckoned immensely to Pound's credit that he so early detected

the vitality and importance of Eliot and of Yeats, going so far as to write that the latter "is the only living man whose work has more than a most temporary interest. I shall survive as a curiosity." That second observation has a curious prescience to it; meanwhile, one might note that he wasn't always such a sufferer from false modesty. It was at the same time that he composed his "Ballad of the Goodly Fere," telling his father that it was "probably about the strongest thing in English since 'Reading Gaol.'" In its evocation of the crucifixion (a little bizarre in view of Pound's general contempt for Christianity) the "Ballad of the Goodly Fere" is a strangely affecting and beautiful piece of work, but it doesn't place him in the same class as Wilde. It's incidentally interesting for being written in dialect and for hitting an early and clearer note of Pound's later dark obsession with usury:

I ha' seen him drive a hundred men
Wi' a bundle o' cords swung free
That they took the high and holy
house
For their pawn and treasury.

Pound's mood swings, between feelings of unworthiness and grandeur, may nonetheless supply a clue. Just as he would ricochet from new enthusiasm to new influence—at different times Rudyard Kipling, James McNeill Whistler (on whose signature he modeled his own), Ernest Dowson, and Wilfred Owen—so his sail was rigged in such a way as to be swollen by any febrile gust of enthusiasm. Under the influence of T. E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis, he made what was certainly the most extreme contribution to the inaugural issue of Lewis's Vorticist magazine, *BLAST*, published on the unintentionally momentous day of June 20, 1914, one week before the archduke's

murder in Sarajevo. The same issue contained a story by Rebecca West and the first chapter of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, while Pound emitted a statement titled "THE TURBINE":

The vortex is the point of maximum energy. All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live. All MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us, RACE, RACE-MEMORY, instinct charging the PLACID, NON-ENERGIZED FUTURE. The DESIGN of the future in the grip of the human vortex. All the past that is vital, all the past that is capable of living into the future, is pregnant in the vortex, NOW.

Again, one can surely be forgiven for seeing a harbinger here, and not only of eventual mental unhingement. In fact, though strictly speaking it lies outside the scope of Moody's book, let me quote from what Wyndham Lewis was later to write about experiencing the energy-loving and race-memory-oriented fascism that he had at first welcomed so warmly:

The senseless bellicosity of the reactionary groups of the *Action Française* type may certainly result in far more violence, before long, than anyone is able to measure.

On another occasion he wrote, "Fascists have the word 'action' on their lips from morning to night." In the same book—*Time and Western Man*—he described his former *BLAST* colleague Ezra Pound as a "revolutionary simpleton." That could perhaps furnish a title for Moody's second volume.

Lewis of course turned against fascism, if only because he decided that it was ultimately just as mob-centered as democracy. Pound's contempt for democracy was of a more determinedly elevated and "artistic" type. It's rather charming to find him turning up at the United States Embassy in London in 1918, opposing the possible drafting of T. S. Eliot into the Army on the grounds that

if it was a war for civilization (not merely for democracy) it was folly to shoot, or have shot one of the six or

seven Americans capable of contributing to civilization or understanding the word.

In a letter home to his father, discussing his own prospects as a conscript, Pound stated more tersely: "It is not however the habit of democracies to use my sort of intelligence." It's difficult to gauge how much this rather airy solipsism had to do with a version of survivor guilt, or an awareness that friends like Ford and Lewis either had endured the test of wartime experience or (like Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, creator of the brilliant statue of Pound that its subject happily considered "phallic") had not survived it.

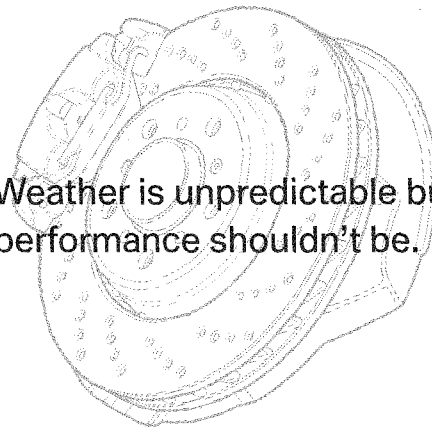
And this must bring us to the writing of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," which was his farewell to England and his envoi, also, to both "democracy" and "civilization." I have never especially admired the *bitch/botch* echo in the poem, which speaks of the huge wartime sacrifice in which Pound himself played no part and then describes it as having been made for "an old bitch gone in the teeth / for a botched civilization." The whole thing reeks of trying too hard, and it anticipates the fanatical drone of "Canto XIV," in which Londoners are described as living in a place full of "financiers / lashing them with steel wires" and:

The slough of unamiable liars,
bog of stupidities,
malevolent stupidities, and stupidities,
the soil living pus, full of vermin,
dead maggots begetting live maggots,
slum owners,
usurers squeezing crab-lice ...

Sometimes credited with presaging or echoing *The Waste Land*, this stuff actually bodies forth and even exceeds the lowest of Eliot, and there can be small doubt, even on a brisk review of the lines, of the sordid direction in which things are tending.

Toward the close of this dense and clever and generally sympathetic study, Moody does cite an essay by Pound on "The Tribe of Judah" and "the pawn-shop" where, as he deftly points out, there is a telltale confusion between



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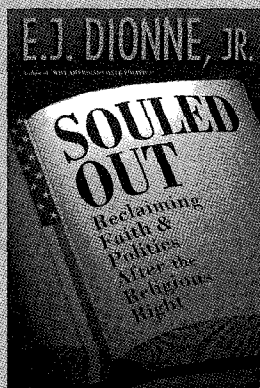
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Judaism and "the Jew." This distinction would eventually become completely lost on Pound, whose eccentric article was written for A. R. Orage's *New Age*, in the offices of which (and what a life he lived for the small and obscure magazine) Pound was to meet Major C. H. Douglas, the crackpot Green-Shirt founder of the Social Credit movement. In Douglas's program, Pound had found his true muse: a blend of folkloric Celtic twilight with a paranoid hatred of the money economy and a dire suspicion about an ancient faith. Moody supplies two very telling examples. In April 1917, Pound had written to his friend John Quinn, urging him to impress on Theodore Roosevelt, of all people, the need for "some system of *direct supply* ... straight from the factory to the particular section of the front where stuff is wanted." But this amateur-planner megalomania was only a foretaste of the pathos to come. In 1921, just before his departure from England, Pound managed to corner Arthur Griffith, easily the most reactionary and ethereal of the Irish leaders, during the tortured negotiations for his nation's independence. He ranted at Griffith in an attempt to convince him to adopt Social Credit so as to use the infant Irish republic as its laboratory. According to Pound, Griffith eventually responded: "All you say is true. But I can't move 'em with a cold thing like economics."

Moody does not mention it, but this very phrase later recurs as a line in "Canto XIX," by which time Pound's poetry had become little more than a doctrinaire and propagandistic screed: a mechanical attempt to make poetry do what economics could not. That such an outcome was a tragedy no reader of this biography can doubt. If one seeks or desires to explain the tragedy, one might say that Shelley wanted poets to be "the unacknowledged legislators" of the world, while Pound sought hectically for acknowledgment, not just for poetry but for himself, and lost the sense of both in the process. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and a *Vanity Fair* columnist.

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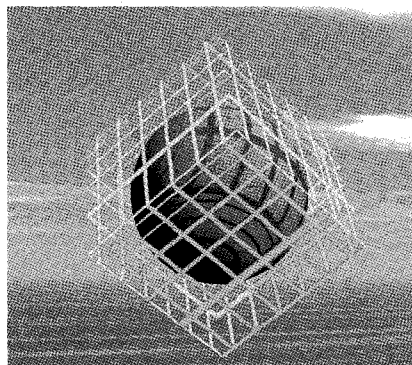
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BOOKS

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COVER to COVER

BIOGRAPHY



Brass Diva:

The Life and Legends of Ethel Merman
by Caryl Flinn (California)

Ethel Merman

by Brian Kellow (Viking)

Both books capture the phenomenon that was Ethel Merman, the tough broad with the megaphone voice who could hurl every word of a lyric by Cole Porter or Stephen Sondheim to the back rows of even the largest theater. What you saw onstage was the essence of Merman: a consummate professional, a trouper, simple, earthy. But these books also delve into her family background, her marriages, her difficult relationships with her children, even her staunch Republican politics, reputed homophobia, and touchiness about mistakenly being thought Jewish. Kellow's book is the lighter of the two, but its portrait is still detailed and perceptive. Flinn's background in women's and media studies informs her lengthy and astute discussion of Merman's iconic status in lesbian and gay circles, along with her well-deserved place in the canon of American musical theater.

Rudyard Kipling:

The Books I Leave Behind

by David Alan Richards (Yale)

Published to mark the centenary of Kipling's Nobel Prize, this handsomely illustrated volume reminds us just how varied was the writer's output. You can see here all manner of Kiplingia—including such unexpected treasures as a song he wrote during the Boer War and his handwritten eulogy to Cecil Rhodes. Although the book is a companion to the recent Kipling exhibition at Yale, its discriminating choice of reproductions and intelligent, stylish commentary make it a fine reader's guide to a writer who—after a mid-century eclipse when the academy foolishly ignored him

as a middlebrow reactionary—is now as much in favor with critics, if not as popular with readers, as he was a hundred years ago.

HISTORY



Lincoln and Douglas:

The Debates That Defined America

by Allen C. Guelzo (Simon & Schuster)

If you find the current presidential campaign depressing, this examination of the Lincoln-Douglas debates offers solace: it wasn't much better back then. The candidates talked past each other, dodged each other's questions, quoted each other out of context, directly insulted each other, cynically played the race card, and allowed surrogates to do their dirty work. But while Guelzo holds Lincoln and Douglas to strict account, he also delivers what may well be the deepest, most instructive study yet of how on-the-ground politics actually worked just before the Civil War and how ordinary people involved themselves with the nation's most fateful political question, the future of slavery.

The Enlightenment and the Book

by Richard B. Sher (Chicago)

The marriage of commerce and culture is always fraught with difficulties, but when it works, its issue can indeed be remarkable. Nowhere was this truer than in Scotland during the late 18th century, when such writers as David Hume, Adam Smith, Hugh Blair, William Robertson, Adam Ferguson, James Boswell, and Robert Burns worked in creative cooperation with their equally enlightened publishers, disseminating their revolutionary works throughout Britain, Europe, and, most tellingly, the Americas. Discerningly illustrated, at once scholarly and accessible, this is an essential addition not only to 18th-century studies but also to the history of the book—a poignant subject in our post-book age.

Nuns: A History of Convent Life, 1450–1700

by Silvia Evangelisti (Oxford)

The success of this engrossing narrative rests primarily on its narrow focus on western Europe and its colonies in the years after the Reformation and before the secular challenges of the Enlightenment. Although the author is sympathetic to the security and the spiritual and intellectual opportunities that cloistered life held for women during this era, she doesn't ignore the costs of withdrawal and isolation. Evangelisti is particularly astute in describing the many and varied contributions the members of religious orders made to the fine arts (including literature and music)—endeavors that often connected the women with their wider communities.

SOCIETY and CULTURE



Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing?

by Leszek Kołakowski (Basic)

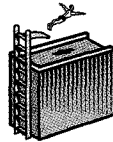
The title of this improbable vade mecum—a sternly selective, mostly chronological survey of some two dozen canonical philosophers and their core precepts—is a fair question (even if bathetically asked). And from the bracing opening salvo (“I do not intend to ‘summarize’ Plato, Descartes or Husserl; that would be an absurd ambition. I would like, rather, to [concentrate] on one idea in the thought of each”) to the deeply engaging last page, Kołakowski—the venerable Polish historian of ideas and author of the seminal and magisterial *Main Currents of Marxism*—offers an answer that is anything but glib. Instead, he offers a discrete, dialectical wonder, a highbrow, low-key little volume that's strangely synchronous: backward-looking, forward-thinking, and—best of all—wholly free of both condescension and commonplaceness.

In Search of the Blues

by Marybeth Hamilton (Basic)

Unrepentantly revisionist and fiercely declarative, this account is less concerned with appreciation than with authentication. Hamilton offers here what amounts to myth-busting: Delta blues didn't exist, she contends. The putative musical genre wasn't an organic evolution of regional idioms so much as a manufactured one, willed into being—and into mid-to-late-20th-century popularity—by “a group of obsessive white men and women.” In spite of her near-heretical thesis (or perhaps because of it), Hamilton writes with restraint and sensitivity. This is a graceful work that tempers and revises such classic chronicles as LeRoi Jones's *Blues People* and Robert Palmer's *Deep Blues*.

FICTION and POETRY



Unaccustomed Earth

by Jhumpa Lahiri (Knopf)

In this collection of stories, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Lahiri limits her palette to first-generation Bengalis in America—grown children who speak little Bengali, marry Westerners, but are nevertheless tied by familial threads to their parents' culture. This allows her to explore with her modulated prose a full range of relationships among her subjects. So thoroughly and judiciously does she use detail that she easily presents entire lives with each short story. These are tales of careful observation and adjustment: a daughter whose mother has recently died discovers that her father has begun a new relationship; a sister realizes she can't rescue her brother from alcoholism; a husband is surprised by the enduring vibrancy of the marriage he feared had dulled. Most moving is the final trio of intertwined stories about loss and connection.

Paradiso

by Dante Alighieri

a verse translation by Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (Doubleday)

Translating Dante's *Commedia*, that 14th-century epic later christened “divine,” has been something of a cottage industry among poets in the United States ever since Longfellow and his

Cambridge friends formed a Dante Club in the 1860s. In recent years, Robert Pinsky, John Ciardi, Mark Musa, Charles Singleton, Allen Mandelbaum, and Anthony Esolen have all provided distinguished versions of the work, in both prose and verse, but this now-completed translation by the Hollanders (their *Inferno* was published in 2000, *Purgatorio* in 2003), with Dante's Italian on the facing pages, will very likely be the most enduring, both as a literary achievement and for its commentaries essential for 21st-century readers.

Day

by A. L. Kennedy (Knopf)

The action of this dark novel is filtered largely through the perceptions of its main character, a former Royal Air Force POW struggling to maintain his sanity. Curiously, it's his sense of being adrift in Britain's drab postwar world, rather than the memories of his wartime experiences, that drag him down. Seeking to find anew the camaraderie he has known only in the military, he volunteers to go to Germany as an extra in a movie about a POW camp. Kennedy skillfully evokes the atmosphere of an edgy defeated Germany and that of a victorious Britain awash in disappointment and disillusion, but she is at her best when conveying the turmoil inside her protagonist's mind.

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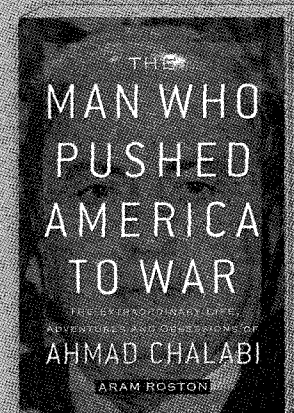
by Tobias Wolff (Knopf)

These tightly focused stories, about a third of them previously unpublished, drive unrelentingly toward their bleak conclusions. Faced with injustice, Wolff's characters—self-centered and easily self-deluded—generally make things worse. In one story, one man eats pancakes and another contemplates adultery while the third in their party bleeds from a gunshot wound in the back of their frozen pickup truck. In another, a man convinces himself that his helpless wife and young son don't need him, so he may as well abandon them. Disturbingly, the selfishness Wolff portrays is believable, even at its most extreme.



MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM
Read an interview with Jhumpa Lahiri
at www.theatlantic.com/lahiri

GIFTED MATHEMATICIAN, CONVICTED FELON, FUGITIVE... CHALABI



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about.com

compartiment réservé reserved berth (on a ship)
plein centre right in the middle
de part et d'autre on either side

cadre frame
sans toile without a canvas
vérité d'échafaudage scaffolding jacks
caisses de belles dimensions nice-sized boxes

entrouverte opening
dépassé sticks out
manche de scie métallique handle of a metal saw
châssis de cornières metal frame

en disgrâce forsaken
Je m'en approche I approach it

deux roues rondes two round outlines
scoles pedestals
dont on aurait retiré l'eau from which someone could have removed the

water
où serait restée where there could have remained

danses étoiles principal dances (in a hall)
c'est pareil quand elles dansent it's the same when they dance

tu finis par suivre you end up following
vide qu'elles dessinent autour of the void that they draw around themselves

tournés face au mur turned to face the wall
dans un ordre croissant in an order of increasing

montrent leur cul show their rear
frères Ripolin a popular brand of paint

shows three painters writing on the wall
blouse retroussée work uniform rolled up

s'acharnant à achever trying doggedly to finish
bachchanale clandestine a secret orgy

pour soi for oneself
clés de la cambuse keys to the storeroom

fatras d'objets hétéroclites hodgepodge of various objects
divers outils de travail various work tools

Je m'accorde un moment de répit I give myself a moment of respite
m'accorde au hublot lean on my elbow

amarrée moored
Le Calla The swordplay (act by Calla)
de mes débuts in effect that I saw at first

brille déjà is still burning

Le Resquilleur du Louvre
The Squatter in the Louvre

J'ai maintenant mon compartiment réservé. Une fenêtre plein centre.
er de part et d'autre un nombre important d'accessoires. Un cadre
entasse sans toile, des véris d'échafaudage, trois caisses de belles
dimensions : de la seule entrouverte dépasse un manche de scie
métallique. Il y a aussi une belle vitrine vide, montée sur un châssis
de cornières, qui se retrouve ici en disgrâce. Je m'en approche.

l'intérieur ne restent que deux traces rondes, sûrement deux
... Un aquarium dont on aurait retiré l'eau mais où serait
la silhouette des poissons. Les danseuses étoiles en tutu, c'est
quand elles dansent : tu finis par suivre des yeux le vide
qu'elles dessinent autour d'elles...

tableaux tournés face au mur, dans un ordre croissant de
montrent leur cul. J'imagine les frères Ripolin, la blouse
s'acharnant à achever une bachchanale clandestine.
s'abandonne quand on a pour soi les clés de la cambuse. A
royale fenêtre, un fatras d'objets hétéroclites, divers
de travail.

un moment de répit, m'accorde au hublot. La Cour
amarrée vingt mètres plus bas. Le Calla de mes débuts
une belle nuit à quel point commencent.

Le Resquilleur du Louvre
by Bernard Chenez

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SUNSET over Dal Lake, Srinagar

TRAVELS

Kashmir tries to reclaim its once-celebrated tranquility.

Paradise Regained?

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

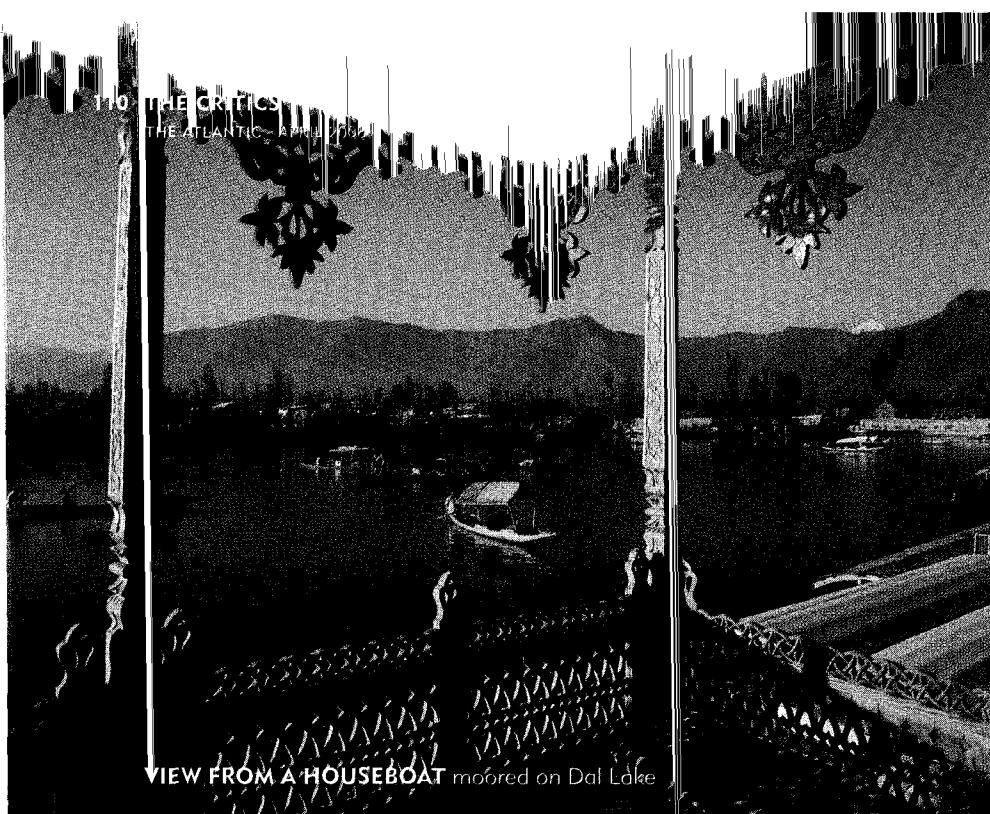
The sky over the Himalayan foothills was just beginning to brighten, and the chants of worshippers wafted across the water from a white-domed mosque on the shore. Jeelani skimmed our wooden boat across the lake's glassy surface, through dense clumps of marsh marigolds and water chestnuts, toward an underpass beneath the lakeside boulevard. "I'm going to take you to a place where very few people go," he said.

Jeelani is a "*shikara* wallah," as these boatmen are called, and on this spring morning he was taking me on a sunrise cruise on Dal Lake, an obligatory ritual for visitors to the Vale of Kashmir, in northern India. You recline on pillows beneath a wooden canopy, perhaps sipping a cup of sweet Kashmiri tea, while your boatman strokes from the stern of

his gondola-like craft—and, if you're lucky, takes you to hidden reaches of the lake. Shortly after gliding through the underpass, we entered a labyrinth of reed-filled channels, willow groves, and small islands covered with rice paddies and tidy vegetable gardens. We drifted for an hour as the sunlight filtered through the trees, casting a silver sheen on the water. A huge kite perched on a dead tree trunk turned its head toward us, flapped its wings, and lifted itself ponderously aloft. Black mynahs, egrets, long-tailed shrikes, reed warblers, and Indian pond herons flitted through the dense foliage, and Himalayan kingfishers dropped like turquoise missiles into the water. "This," Jeelani told me, his paddle dipping rhythmically into the canal, "is the Kashmir that has never changed."

The Kashmir he was referring to was the place I had encountered on my first visit, in 1985: a peaceful Himalayan enclave where backpackers and well-heeled tourists alike could retreat from the concerns of the larger world. "Kashmir, only Kashmir," the 17th-century Mogul emperor Jehangir is said to have muttered on his deathbed when asked if he had a final wish. But the tranquility I found there in 1985 was ephemeral. Pakistan and India have been feuding over possession of the valley ever since the 1947 partition of the subcontinent, and in 1989, Muslim separatists launched a rebellion against the Indian

MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM
For a slideshow of Kashmir, narrated by Joshua Hammer, visit www.theatlantic.com/kashmir.



VIEW FROM A HOUSEBOAT moored on Dal Lake

THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Where to stay

Far and away the most luxurious and atmospheric choice in Srinagar is **Butt's Clermont Houseboats** (buttsclermonthouseboats.com), located on Dal Lake about half a mile down the road from the Hazratbal mosque. A butler will bring meals and afternoon tea to your dining room, and the *shikara* wallah (or his son) will take you on predawn or late-afternoon cruises on the lake. The cost of staying on a boat, including meals, is \$75 per night for a single and \$115 for a double; for a *shikara* cruise, add \$10 to \$15. Dozens of cheaper houseboats can be found in the Golden Lake area, a channel running along the main lakefront boulevard.

If you prefer dry land, your best bet is the **Grand Palace Srinagar** (www.ichotelsgroup.com/intercontinental/en/gb/locations/overview/srinagar), a lavish 1910 villa built for the maharaja of Kashmir in the Himalayan foothills above Dal Lake. The hotel, now part of the InterContinental chain, has 115 rooms, suites, and cottages set on lovely grounds that sweep toward the water. Rates start at about \$275 a night for a standard room, \$475 for a cottage, and \$1,140 for the Presidential Suite.

In Gulmarg, the hotel of choice is the colonial-era **Highland Park** (highlandparkgulmarg@nivalink.com). Rooms start at \$140 a night, including meals.

Where to eat

Most tourists staying on houseboats prefer to eat on board, and the food has a deliberately Raj-like feel: multiple courses and heavy on the mutton. But if you're feeling adventurous, numerous small restaurants scattered throughout the city serve the traditional *wazwan*, an elaborate Kashmiri dinner consisting of meat dishes, vegetables, rice, and dessert. The restaurant at the **Grand Palace** hotel is pricey, but one of the best in town. For lunches ranging from hummus and falafel to tuna croissants, and the best cappuccino in Srinagar, try the recently opened **Coffea Arabica** in the downtown Broadway Hotel.

What to do

Most mornings, beginning just before dawn, Srinagar plays host to a floating market on Dal Lake, a lively spectacle with hundreds of vendors selling fruit and vegetables from their slender *shikaras*. Rising above the lake is the biggest tourist draw in Kashmir: the **Shalimar Gardens**, a magnificent arrangement of flower beds, pools, and fountains laid out 400 years ago by the Mogul emperor Jehangir for his wife. The gardens at **Nishat Bagh**, though smaller, are perhaps even more spectacular, with their towering plane trees imported from Persia.

government. Pakistani agents began arming and training Islamist militants and looking the other way as they crossed the border. Over the next decade, tens of thousands of people—most of them civilians—were killed, the minority Hindu population fled the valley, and the tourists vanished.

I returned to Kashmir as a *Newsweek* correspondent on October 8, 2001—the day after the United States began bombing Afghanistan. In Srinagar, the main city, the violence had reached a peak. Islamist fanatics had just attacked the state assembly, killing some 40 people, and had started throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women on the streets. A pro-Taliban mob swarmed my car and tried to pull me out, screaming “American! American!” On my third evening, colleagues told me that an extremist group was planning to kidnap me, and five policemen evacuated me from the houseboat where I was staying to a hotel in the center of town.

The atmosphere began to change about two years ago, local officials say, in part because Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf started cutting off the militants' funding and reportedly shut down many of their training camps. The violence dropped dramatically, and the tourists started to come back. Several daily flights now shuttle between New Delhi and Srinagar.

This past May I decided to go back myself, to see how much of the old Kashmir remained. The mood in Srinagar was upbeat, though tentatively so. “Musharraf might be dictator in Pakistan, but for us he is a messiah,” Muzamil Jaleel, a longtime reporter for *The Indian Express*, told me when I met with him at Coffea Arabica, a new Starbucks knockoff downtown. But later that afternoon, Jaleel took me to meet Usmaan Raheem Ahmad, a Kashmiri American aid worker and the coach of a local soccer team consisting mostly of teenage war orphans. The team was eager to play but couldn't find a practice field. All of the city's open spaces had been turned into military training grounds or cemeteries. “The prime minister says that the peace process

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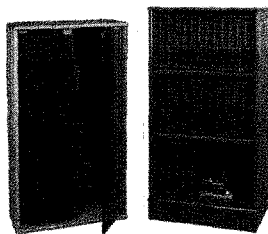
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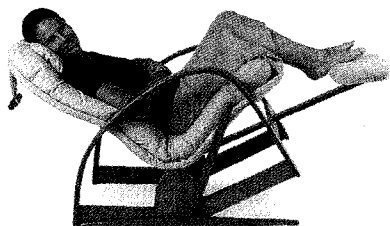
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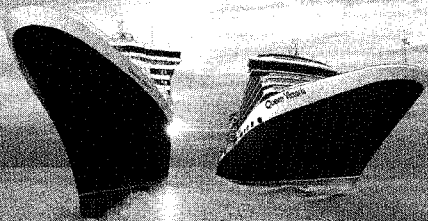
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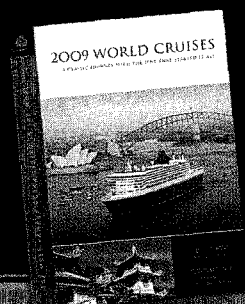


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is irreversible, but moving forward is hard to do when you're still stuck in a psychological gray zone," Ahmad said.

Lodging on a houseboat is a storied tradition in Kashmir, dating back to the mid-19th century, at the height of the British Raj. The maharaja of Kashmir, who ruled from a palace overlooking the lake, submitted to British dominion, but insisted on one condition: that the occupiers and other non-natives refrain from putting up any fixed buildings in the state. They agreed, then put up homes on the water instead. (Among the first houseboat owners was John Lockwood Kipling, Rudyard's father.)

The houseboat where I stayed in 2001, part of Butt's Clermont Houseboats, has long had one of the best addresses in the valley: the secluded northwest edge of Dal Lake. There was a time when Butt's houseboats were booked years in advance by diplomats and affluent tourists, but for the past 15 years, virtually the only guests have been war correspondents. On my return last May, I found the owner, Gulam Butt, in a guardedly optimistic frame of mind. "Welcome back, welcome back!" he exclaimed. The look of the place hadn't changed. The walls of Butt's office were still covered with faded newspaper clips from the 1970s ("Floating Paradise!") and framed photos of the celebrities who had stayed there in a bygone era: George Harrison (five days in Houseboat No. 1, recently dredged up from where it had sunk in the shallows), Ravi Shankar, Nelson Rockefeller, then-U.S. Ambassador to India Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Butt's five boats—long, delicately curving structures of cedarwood, with latticework trim—glinted in the sunlight from their moorings along the shore. Four were occupied, two by New Delhi-based British journalists and their families, two by tourists, and all were booked through the summer.

Along the lakefront boulevard—lined with dozens more houseboats with names like *Young Mona Lisa*, *Golden Bell*, *Duke of Windsor*, and *New Cherry Ripe*—the *shikara* wallahs were selling flowers, papier-mâché elephants, and cruises to

the mostly Indian tourist crowd. A newlywed couple practiced their golf putts on the vast manicured lawns of the Grand Palace hotel, formerly the maharaja's palace. The magnificent 115-room villa, I learned from a receptionist, was running at 70 percent occupancy—quite a change from 2001, when I had waited 45 minutes in the deserted reception hall until a flustered clerk appeared. "Sorry, sir," he'd said, "but we don't ever receive guests."

Still, the old aura of serenity has not quite been recaptured, and one can still glimpse fear and trauma beneath the surface. Everyone I talked to had a story about the conflict—the dusk-to-dawn curfews, the grenade attacks in the markets—and no one was willing to say that such things were safely in the past. When we encountered an army patrol in a market one evening, Jeelani instinctively grabbed my arm and pulled me back. "We keep our distance from them," he told me. "Everybody's still afraid the soldiers will be ambushed by militants, and we'll be caught in the cross fire. It hasn't happened in a while, but we can't get it out of our heads." There were other reasons to keep the soldiers at arm's length: Indian paramilitary troops and police had recently been accused of killing men and planting evidence on them, hoping to claim rewards for fighting terrorism. "There is a generation [of troops] here who are used to killing, and they don't know how to handle peace," Muzamil Jaleel told me. "So they pick up guys at random to keep the momentum going."

Meanwhile, the Islamists, though their numbers have diminished, also keep the valley on edge. When I got to town, Asiya Andrabi, the leader of the Daughters of the Nation (the group that had allegedly planned to kidnap me), had just said in a newspaper interview that she wished her son would grow up to assassinate George W. Bush. Usmaan Ahmad, the soccer coach, had recently organized a Kashmiri-rap concert at a local hotel, but he relied on flash-party tactics—spreading the word through text messages on mobile phones—to keep the event discreet. "That element is still something to be reckoned with," he told me.

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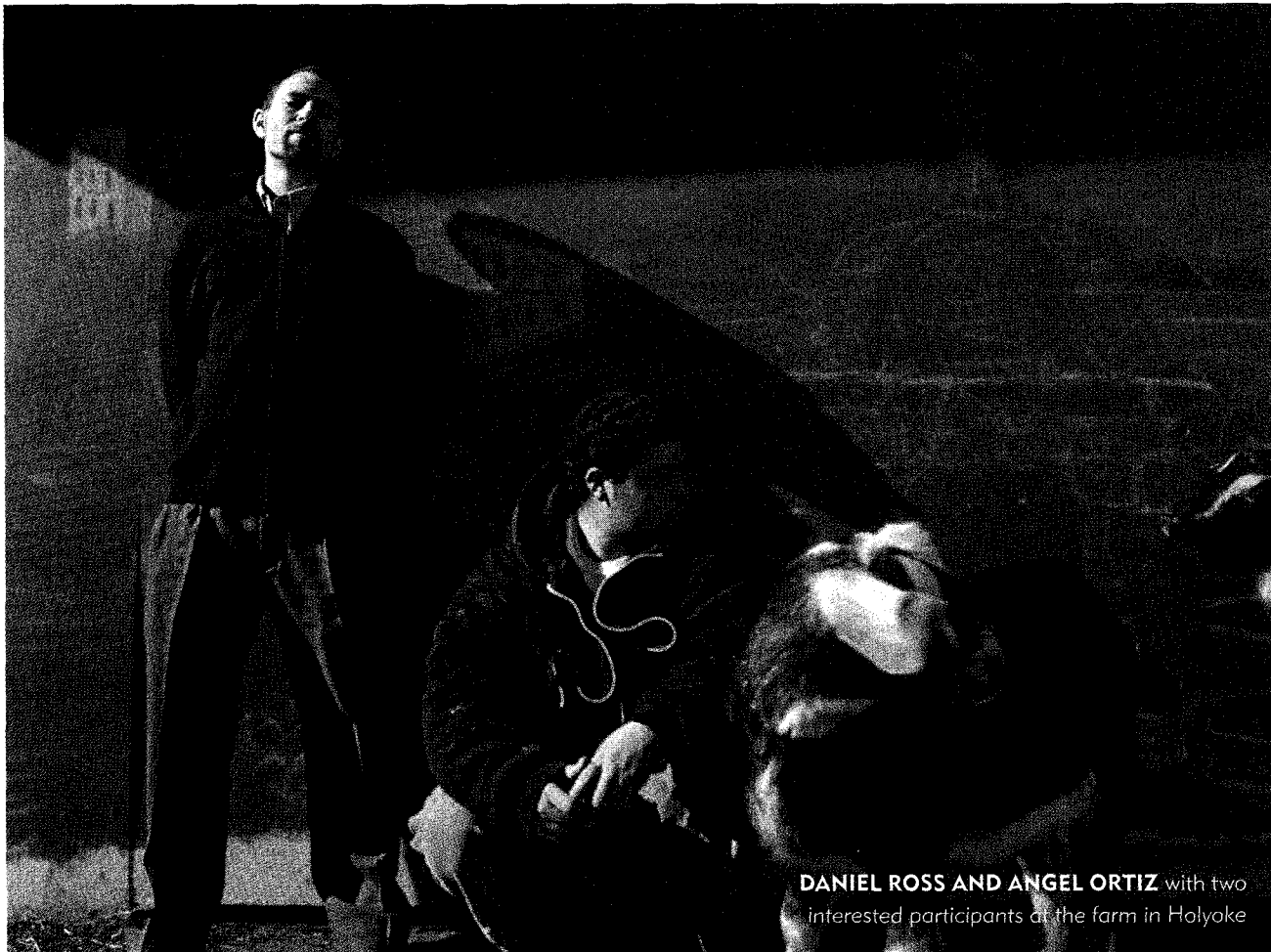
As are militant incursions from Pakistan. The chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Police told me that in 2006, between 350 and 400 militants had been seized crossing between India and Pakistan—a big drop from the thousands who had crossed in years past, but still a significant number. Islamist militants attempting to disrupt the valley's recovery killed several Indian tourists in grenade attacks in July 2006. The tourist flow had quickly regained its momentum, but, as Jaleel told me, "one more grenade attack could change everything."

On my last day in Kashmir, my driver and I climbed from the valley floor to Gulmarg, the "meadow of flowers"—site of the valley's most popular new attraction, a gondola that carries people up the slopes of the Pir Panjal range to some of the finest off-piste skiing in the world. A French engineering firm finished construction on the second stage of the lift—which reaches an elevation of more than 13,000 feet—three years ago, after abandoning the project in 1990 when two of its employees were abducted by militants. The cable car has become a potent, and lucrative, symbol of Kashmir's renewal: world-class skiers flock here in the winter months.

By the time of my visit, the skiers had all gone home, but the cable cars were packed with vacationing families from Mumbai and New Delhi, bundled up in fur coats, hats, boots, and gloves. After riding the gondola, they paid a sledge wallah a few rupees to tote them further uphill and then push them down. I saw a small girl gasp in amazement as she took in the entire vale: the contoured terraces of strawberries and cherries, the silver splash of Dal Lake, and, far beyond, the serrated ridgeline of the Himalayas. Too young to know anything of Kashmir's bloody history, she rolled a snowball in her mittens, balanced herself on a precipice, and let it fly. The missile made a graceful arc, then disappeared toward the valley below. ▀

Joshua Hammer is a writer based in Berlin. He is at work on a book about a colonial-era rebellion and reprisal in southwest Africa.

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DANIEL ROSS AND ANGEL ORTIZ with two interested participants at the farm in Holyoke

FOOD

A crime-plagued mill town in Massachusetts has discovered the roots of urban renewal.

A Papaya Grows in Holyoke

BY CORBY KUMMER

“Tell him what happened with the sign,” Daniel Ross said to Angel Ortiz at the gate to Nuestras Raíces farm, 30 acres of vegetables, animals, and flowers on the banks of the Connecticut River in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Ortiz, a strapping but shy 18-year-old who helps tend the farm—“the pig whisperer,” Ross calls him—looked down. “It was just a truck!” he said. Then he told the story: “I backed up and it broke on me.” Ross, smiling, stretched out his hand to take

Ortiz’s in a long, solid grip. “Angel’s going to be the next mayor of Holyoke,” he said.

Young people run things at Nuestras Raíces (“Our Roots”), the nonprofit agency Ross heads. They’re allowed to screw up and figure out how to fix their own problems. Many agencies around the country encourage similar activities: city gardening, youth training, healthful eating, entrepreneurship. But few have integrated themselves with equal reach

and results, or helped rebuild as troubled a community as Holyoke.

Though it is in the bucolic Pioneer Valley, Holyoke, among the state’s poorest cities, is notorious for its drug use and attendant crime. As in many picturesque New England river cities with impressive Romanesque Revival buildings, mills made it rich and then dealt it a decisive blow when labor costs shut them down. In Holyoke’s case, the mills made paper, not textiles, and the blow came relatively

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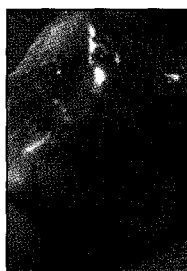
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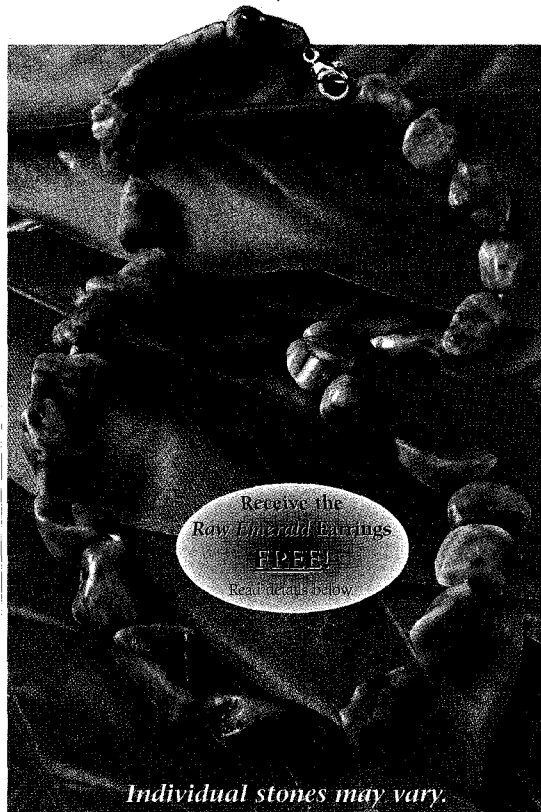
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late—after a sizable Puerto Rican population had settled there in the 1960s and '70s, drawn by factory jobs and nearby tobacco farms. The farm jobs dried up about the same time the mills closed, and unemployment rates have remained high. But the knowledge and love of farming have stayed strong in the Puerto Rican community, which accounts for nearly 40 percent of the city's population.

Holyoke was thus fertile ground for "urban agriculture"—the successor to the still-flourishing community-garden movement, which itself grew out of World War II victory gardens. In the late 1960s, in the wake of urban renewal's wholesale razing, community gardens cleaned up blighted lots, curbed vandalism, and gave people who had never had one a say in how their neighborhoods were run. Today, according to the American Community Gardening Association, there are more than 17,000 community gardens all over the country. The urban-agriculture movement looks for ways people can make money on what they grow (seldom a focus of community gardens) and puts an emphasis on training youth to strengthen their communities. And it gives people access to fresh vegetables in "food deserts" where the only oases are gas stations and convenience stores.

As you might expect in the "Five College" area, Nuestras Raíces was born with the help of a thesis—one on community gardens written by Seth Williams, an undergraduate at Hampshire College. Williams worked with several experienced gardeners and community leaders in South Holyoke to find land, water, and tools for a new community garden to replace one lost to development. To keep the garden and the alliances around it alive, community members founded Nuestras Raíces in 1992. One garden has grown to nine, and the annual budget is now more than \$800,000.

Much of the growth has been under Ross, who became executive director in 1995 at just 22, after a childhood steeped in activism and a year spent working with migrant farmworkers up and down the East Coast. Ross is a wiry man with

big green eyes. He listens intently, and he is laconic. His group's ability to draw in local health centers, churches, and schools and give the reins to young people has made Nuestras Raíces a national model. "There's so much discourse around community voice," says Linda Jo Doctor, program director for health at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, in Battle Creek, Michigan, which took an early interest in Nuestras Raíces. "But it's real there."

Last year, Kellogg invited Nuestras Raíces to apply to be part of a new long-term initiative called "Food and Fitness." Working with the Holyoke Health Center, Ross helped assemble a coalition of about 75 groups that asked for a \$500,000 two-year planning grant. The coalition was one of just nine in the country to win one—a signal achievement for Nuestras Raíces and for Holyoke, which if the plans are approved stands to get as much as \$3.75 million.

Even in the middle of winter, when I visited, it was apparent how meticulously the gardens are maintained—unlike many other urban gardens I know, which out of season can resemble the trash heaps they started out as. Everything looked freshly groomed: the wooden fences separating individual 15-by-20-foot plots, the gaily painted *casitas*, tool sheds that are "artistic statements," Ross told me, and gathering places like stoops. Several gardens had plastic-covered hoop houses, greenhouses that in the dead of winter can get pretty grungy. I didn't detect a rip.

"We have nine community gardens in some of the toughest neighborhoods in the city if not the country," Ross said, "and the incidence of vandalism has been almost zero." Joel Cortijo, a colleague along for the tour, said simply, "It's ours." Cortijo, 30, grew up in Holyoke and spent six years in the Army before returning to run a high-school basketball league; he is now co-coordinator of Holyoke's Food and Fitness Policy Council, which will help decide how to spend money from the Kellogg grant. Harming a garden, he said, "would be like vandalizing your own car."

Oran Hesterman, a former program director for Kellogg, told me that

when he visited Nuestras Raíces, he was impressed by something Ross didn't do: "fall all over himself" to give him the grand tour. "He was busy," he said. So Ross left him in the hands of two 15-year-old workers, proof that Nuestras Raíces "really trusts young people to give the straight story."

Gardens are the heart of everything Nuestras Raíces does. Children can often be found playing in vegetable patches and in adjacent playgrounds built on land cleared of needles, broken glass, and brush that gave dealers a place to hide their drugs. Grandfathers and fathers, many of whom grew up on farms in Puerto Rico, teach schoolchildren how to grow peppers and eggplants and experiment in greenhouses on the farm with exotics like papayas and avocados, to see what they can get to grow in the New England climate. "During the summer you'll find a dozen guys sitting on tables and benches," Ross said, "shell-ing beans and telling lies about the size of their tomatoes."

Whole families help with the preparation of a winter's supply of *sofrito*, the condiment made with onion, garlic, cilantro, green peppers, and *ajices dulces* (sweet cooking peppers) that forms the base for many Puerto Rican dishes. Janet Crespo Santana makes it to sell out of a test kitchen at Nuestras Raíces's downtown headquarters. The kitchen, approved for commercial use, is the home of El Jardín, a successful artisan bakery that makes an impressively crusty sourdough loaf in a wood-fired brick oven (it supplies local restaurants, and recently opened its own café in tony South Deerfield).

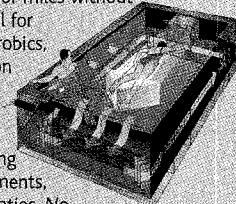
Practically everyone in town comes for lunch at Mi Plaza, a restaurant in the same building that uses Nuestras Raíces herbs and vegetables in the summer and makes traditional Puerto Rican food all year—some of it healthful (stewed chicken over plantains mashed with garlic, rice with fresh herbs and calabaza squash), some of it less so (Ross's favorite, *alcapurria*, fritters of chile-spiked beef *picadillo* in a dough of grated taro root and green bananas).

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Nutritionists in the sunny teaching kitchen of the health center, which is housed in a splendidly renovated furniture store downtown, show patients how to reduce the fat in traditional Puerto Rican dishes (Holyoke has the state’s highest diabetes rate), using fresh fruit and vegetables from the supermarket out of season and from a student-run *Nuestras Raíces* stand at a weekly farmers’ market in front of City Hall. “It goes way beyond food,” Ross said, “but it starts with food.”

The farm, a mile from downtown Holyoke, was *Nuestras Raíces*’ response to requests from community gardeners for larger plots that they could work commercially. It has turned into an attraction of its own, with a petting zoo, a farm stand, summer concerts, and weekly pig roasts—a look, and a life, as close as people in the Puerto Rican community can come to the villages they and their families remember.

A massive effort to till the overgrown land—the original four acres grew to 30 when the Sisters of Providence next door offered 26 prime acres for a nominal rent—brought together students, church groups, and pre-release prisoners to chop out invasive species, haul and spread tons of compost, and clear nature trails along the river. In a moment of what he now calls mad ambition, Ross decided to move an enormous red gabled barn from a site a few miles away. It was roofless when I saw it, but the plan is to house *paso finos*, “fine-stepping” horses that are a source of Puerto Rican pride.

Farmers go through an eight-week training program during which they write a business plan that serves as their application for a plot; so far, 20 of 45 applicants have been given plots at a monthly rent of \$25 a quarter-acre, and microloans to start “incubator farms.” Teenage farmers don’t pay rent.

When not pig whispering, Angel Ortiz grows vegetables to sell at farm stands on the plot he rents with his friend Bob Chipman, which they call Angel and Bob’s Farm. He hopes to sell salad greens and tomatoes and even kale to his high

school, Dean Technical, right down the road, “where we never have fresh vegetables, ever.”

Ortiz knows how to cook the vegetables he grows (he told me how he fries eggplant): his father is a professional cook, and “half my friends,” he says, are studying to be chefs at Dean Technical. “Some people think gardening is for girls only,” he told me, “and you should get a real job, like working at a factory.” But “seeing someone popular do it makes it easier.”

So does seeing men grow vegetables during the day and use the gardens as social clubs at night. On summer weekends, there are music festivals on a bandstand built from foraged wood. The pig roasts, tended by men, are so popular that the farm will spin off a *lechonera*, the name for restaurants and roadside stands all over Puerto Rico that sell spit-roasted pig and traditional side dishes.

Similar groups are growing (you can find programs that focus on youth and agriculture at www.thefoodproject.org/youthorgs). The People’s Grocery runs five city gardens in and around Oakland, California, and is planning a new 15-acre farm and park, with the aim of creating jobs for young people; in Boston, the Food Project has long been a national leader in teaching city high-school students how to farm, inviting students from around the city to its summer programs; in Brooklyn, Added Value is starting a 2.75-acre “urban farm” on a former playground in Red Hook, a primarily African American community, and has already launched a successful farmers’ market staffed by students.

But *Nuestras Raíces* stands out. The key, I was told by foundation managers and city officials, is active leaders who let the people the program is intended for set its agenda instead of the usual, as Linda Jo Doctor put it, “grown-ups deciding what young people need.”

“Food projects,” Ross told me, as he and Ortiz walked me back to the farm gate long after dark, “are an extremely powerful way to get at what’s healthy about a community.” ■

Corby Kummer is an *Atlantic* senior editor.

CULTURE AND COMMERCE

How better aesthetics in hospitals can make
for happier—and healthier—patients

The Art of Healing

BY VIRGINIA POSTREL

I'm sitting in a mauve vinyl recliner facing a mauve laminate counter and cabinets. On the countertop are a couple of candy jars, five peacock feathers leaning around a black wall phone, a small plant that may or may not be real, three boxes of medical-exam gloves, and a radio tuned to smooth jazz. A curling five-by-seven-inch photo of the participants in a 2000 fund-raising walk hangs below a sign warning guests not to use cell phones. Someone has pinned three teddy bears to a small strip of cork on the grayish-white wall. "I'm gonna be Okay," says the slogan on the orange bear's chest. The yellow bear wears a blue scrub outfit with an 800 number and the slogan for a cancer organization. On the white bear, hot-pink embroidery declares, "Cancer sucks."

Thank God for intravenous Benadryl, which knocks me out in just a few minutes. The cancer treatment is state-of-the-art, but the decor is decidedly behind the times.

Over the past decade, most public places have gotten noticeably better looking. We've gone from a world in which Starbucks set a cutting-edge standard for mass-market design to a world in which Starbucks establishes the bare minimum. If your establishment can't come up with an original look, customers expect at least some sleek wood fixtures, nicely upholstered chairs, and faux-Murano glass pendant lights.

Unless, that is, your establishment is a doctor's office, medical clinic, or hospital. Mounting clinical evidence suggests that better design can improve patients' health—not to mention their morale. But the one-sixth of the American economy devoted to health care hasn't kept up



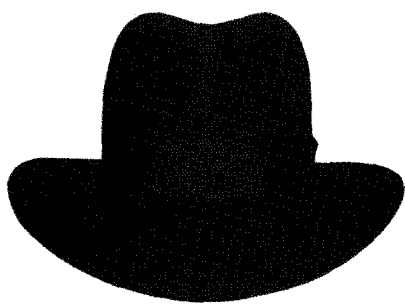
FLOWER POWER: Images of nature, like those at this Duke University cancer clinic, can ease patient stress.

with the rest of the economy's aesthetic imperative, leaving patients to wonder, as a diabetes blogger puts it, "why hospital clinic interiors have to feel so much like a Motel 6 from the '70s."

A Hyatt from the early '80s might be more accurate. The United States is in the midst of a hospital-building boom, with some \$200 billion expected to be spent on new facilities between 2004 and 2014. Although more spacious and sunlit than the 50-year-old boxes they often replace, even new medical centers tend to concentrate their amenities in public areas, the way hotels used to feature lavish atriums but furnish guest rooms with dirt-hiding floral bedspreads and fake-wood desks. Hospital lobbies may now have gardens, waterfalls, and piano music, but that doesn't mean their patient rooms, emergency departments, or imaging suites are also well designed.

"Except for the computers you see, it's like a 1980s hospital," says Jain Malkin, a San Diego-based interior designer and the author of several reference books on health-care design. "The place where patients spend their time 24/7 is treated as if it's back-of-the-house."

Consider diagnostic imaging departments. MRIs and CT scans can frighten many patients, and research shows that simple elements such as nature photos can ease their stress. Yet the typical scanner room still looks "as if it's a workshop for cars," says Malkin, with bare walls and big machines. One of the bleakest rooms at the UCLA Medical Plaza, where I spend my time, is a waiting room in the imaging center. Small and beige, it epitomizes aesthetic neglect, with stained chairs, mismatched tiles, and tattered copies of *U.S. News & World Report*. The only wall art is a drug-company poster



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Cost is of course an issue. Malkin estimates that enhanced design amenities can add about 3 percent to the cost of a large project. The big shortage, though, is not money but attention. When hospital boards and executives talk with architects and designers, it's rarely about the imaging department.

Also, unlike a hotel, a medical center rarely trains its staff to pay attention to how the place looks to guests. Hence the often-torn drug posters, teddy bears, and countertop clutter. If you work somewhere every day, after a while you don't notice eight-year-old snapshots and peacock feathers too tall for the space. The ad hoc, staff-oriented decorating that

like. In academic surveys, patients in better-decorated, hotel-like rooms rate not just the environment but their medical care more highly than do patients in rooms with standard hospital beds and no artwork. That customer-satisfaction result would tell any smart hotelier to redecorate. But hospitals feel less competitive pressure and are more resistant to change.

Patients like me are part of the problem. When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I didn't shop around for the most attractive chemotherapy clinic. I went to the best oncologist I could find and got the room that came with him. "Most people would take the most-competent clinicians even if they were in the worst possible environment," says Malkin.

In one study, patients in sunnier rooms rated their stress and pain lower and took 22 percent less pain medication each hour.

fills an aesthetic vacuum can be worse than bare walls. Lee Mequet, a Southern California real-estate agent, recalls a chemotherapy visit with her husband, who was so ravaged by lung cancer that his skull and bones showed under his skin. The treatment room, she says, was "decorated for Halloween, with pumpkins and paper skeletons, and the tragicomic horrorfulness of the images made me want to rip the fucking things from the wall." Alas, cable TV has yet to create a makeover show called *Designed to Heal*.

When I started thinking about health-care design, I assumed that insurance price controls and third-party payments were the source of the problem. But hotels upgrade their rooms to please business travelers whose expense accounts impose budget limits. When fares were set by law, airlines competed by offering better food and prettier stewardesses. Patients generally do decide where to take their business, even if rates are fixed and someone else is paying. They may not know what their health care costs, but they certainly know what the hospital looks

like. But why assume good medicine must come with bad design? Most hotel guests care more about reliable reservations than about crisp duvet covers. That doesn't mean they want ugly rooms, though. Given the choice, they'll go for the hotel that offers the best of both. When Starwood Hotels, which owns the Westin, Sheraton, and W brands, upgraded its rooms in the late 1990s, the rest of the hotel industry followed.

Under similar competitive pressure, medical facilities react the same way. When Baby Boomer women started choosing hotel-like birthing centers over hospital delivery rooms, hospitals quickly wised up. Now even rural hospitals offer well-designed labor-delivery-recovery suites. "People do shop, and they will actually sometimes change an obstetrician because they want a certain hospital experience," says Malkin.

Much of the time, however, patients don't know they can do better. Take semi-private rooms. Like hotel guests, sick people aren't eager to share their rooms with strangers. But most patients assume they

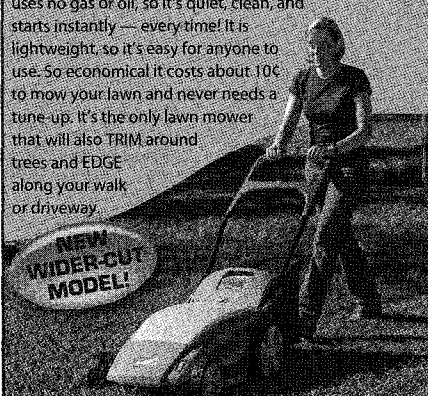
don't have a choice. "You grow up thinking that is how hospitals are, that there's always two people in a room," says Malkin. As of 2006, however, the American Institute of Architects' guidelines, which many states use for their regulatory codes, specify single rooms in new medical-surgical and postpartum units. Medical centers may not care what makes patients happy—such a subjective, unscientific concept!—but they can no longer ignore the research demonstrating that single rooms lead to better outcomes: lower infection rates, shorter stays, less noise and hence better sleep, fewer expensive patient transfers and subsequent medical errors, and much less stress for patients.

Such "evidence-based design," which draws its principles from controlled studies, is the great hope of professionals who want to upgrade the look and feel of medical centers. Much of this research follows a seminal 1984 *Science* article by Roger S. Ulrich, now at the Center for Health Systems and Design at Texas A&M. He looked at patients recovering from gall-bladder surgery in a hospital that had some rooms overlooking a grove of trees and identical rooms facing a brick wall. The patients were matched to control for characteristics, such as age or obesity, that might influence their recovery. The results were striking. Patients with a view of the trees had shorter hospital stays (7.96 days versus 8.70 days) and required significantly less high-powered, expensive pain medication.

Along similar lines, a 2005 study compared patients recovering from elective spinal surgery whose rooms were on the sunny side of a ward with those on the dimmer side. Those in the sunnier rooms rated their stress and pain lower and took 22 percent less pain medication each hour, incurring only 80 percent of the pain-medication costs of the patients in gloomier rooms. Other studies, with subjects ranging from the severely burned to cancer patients to those receiving painful bronchoscopies, have found that looking at nature images significantly reduces anxiety and increases pain tolerance. Not all distractions are good, however. Ulrich and others have found that inescapable

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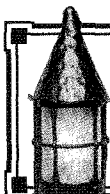
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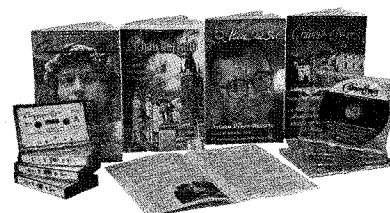
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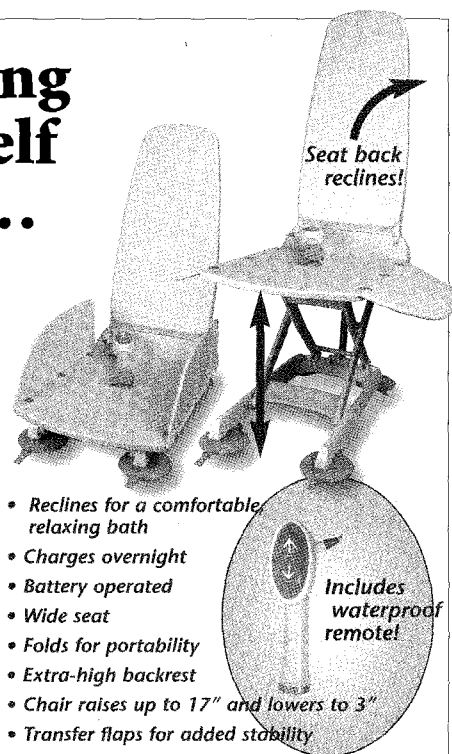
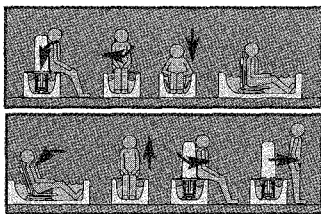
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TV broadcasts and "chaotic abstract art" can increase patients' stress.

Of course, Starbucks and Starwood didn't wait for decades of peer-reviewed research to prove that customers would respond to better aesthetics. Their CEOs were willing to bet that subjective quality improvements would translate into higher sales. Patients like the diabetes blogger who are tired of "dreary, dull and dare I say, a bit depressing" medical environments need similar visionaries.

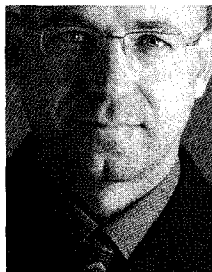
Meet Joanna Cain, an oncologist and the director of the Center for Women's Health at the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. When the center hired interior designers for its new facility, Cain told them she wanted the place to feel like a day spa filled with artwork. She got her wish, with cherry-wood finishes, curving fixtures and ceilings, warm colors, chair groupings that encourage conversation, and slate accent walls. The mission and design inspired philanthropy—gifts not only of money but also of glass-art tiles, a "grandmother's garden" of rosemary and lavender, and, above all, lots of art. "Going to the doctor now has a bit of the feeling of also going to see a very special, almost private, art collection at the same time," says one patient. "I can't tell you how nice that has been, especially when you are going for a less-than-pleasant procedure or discussion, or are simply in pain."

Cain acknowledges that "it does cost more to build this, but not that much more"—perhaps 10 percent to 15 percent. Asked how she measures the design's success, Cain points to her patients undergoing chemotherapy: "It's a place that makes them happy." She acknowledges that a beautiful environment should never trump excellent care. "But take it from the other side," she says. "If you have a choice and you can be in a place full of light, where there's beautiful art that your eyes can rove over and feel comfort from—which would be a better experience, assuming they both are the same [medically]? And why don't we think people deserve that?"

Virginia Postrel is an Atlantic contributing editor and the author of *The Substance of Style* (2003).

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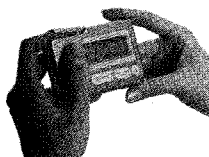
remarkable new medical device called the StressEraser.

This medical breakthrough actually reverses *ergotropic tuning*; the harmful process that causes your nerves to respond faster and more strongly to stress; making you feel it more easily, more quickly, more intensely.

Medical Discovery Leads to Breakthrough in Reducing Stress.

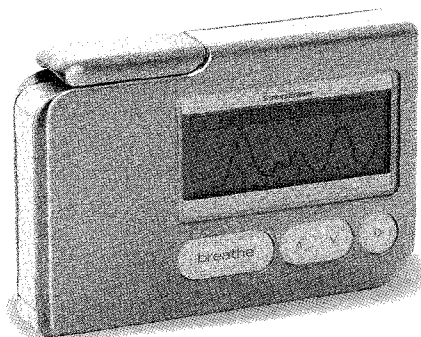
Medical researchers now know that the harmful effects of *ergotropic tuning* are intricately connected to the biological mechanisms of breathing. More importantly, they learned that you can actually regulate the stress-producing activity of this system by regulating this basic bodily function.

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Compact and easy to use - takes just 15 minutes a day.

The StressEraser is designed to fit in the palm of your hand and is simple to operate. All it takes is a relaxing 15 minutes right before bed each night to adjust your breathing; then set it aside.



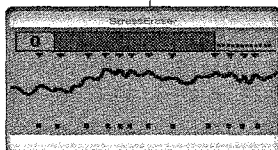
Your system will continue to reverse the effects of the stress you've built up all day - while you sleep!

Erase stress while you sleep and feel good again in 30 Days.*

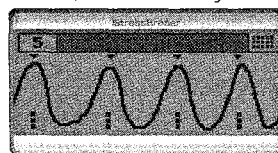
Within two weeks you will begin to feel a difference all day long. And within a month, you will feel like you did when you were young, before the stresses caused by *ergotropic tuning*, became part of your life.

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Try the StressEraser before bed FREE for 30 nights and Helicor guarantees you will feel good again or simply return it. No questions asked.



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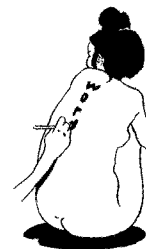
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WORD COURT

BY BARBARA WALLRAFF

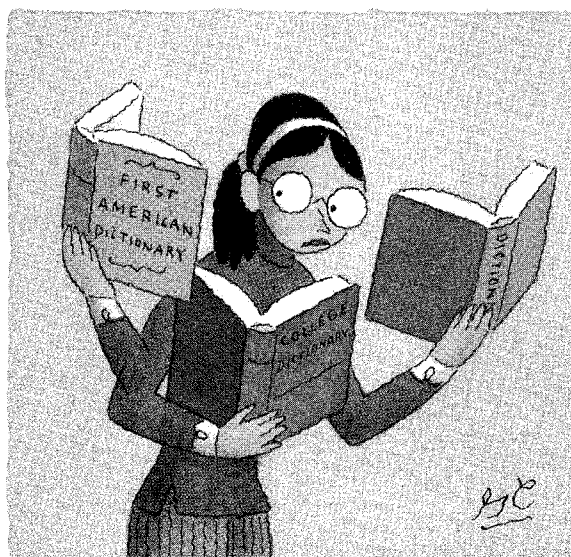


TOM ROSS, of Palo Alto, Calif., writes, "Would you please help settle a family dispute? People often say *cut to the chase* when they want the speaker to get to the heart of a topic. But my contention is that the correct usage is *cut to the chaste*. I believe that this phrase has its origins in 18th-century battleground surgery, in which a medic had to remove all contaminated tissue, or *cut to the chaste* tissue, to allow the patient's wound to heal."

Sorry, but the standard version is *cut to the chase*, not to the *chaste*—or the *chaff*, as some other people seem to think. (Still others think *cut to the quick* is synonymous, although it really means "wound deeply," or they conflate two idiomatic phrases to get *cut to the point*, or—don't get me started!) The expression comes from Hollywood, and it began as a director's instruction to cut from relatively unexciting footage to a chase scene. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, the phrase *chase scene* has been part of movie terminology for a century (think cavalry and posses). The earliest citation given for *cut to chase* is from *Hollywood Girl*, a 1929 novel.

Only since the 1980s or thereabouts, though, has *cut to the chase* been used figuratively the way you describe. It might seem curious that such a recent expression has already spun off variants complete with backstories. But the backstories I've read, including yours, tend to be old-timey. This leads me to suspect that people came up with them because they couldn't believe the standard expression is as modern as it is.

ROSALIE PFAFF, of Colonia, N.J., writes, "I have recently finished reading a new biography of Beatrix Potter. It frequently mentions, in the sheep-farming portion of her life, *fell farming*, *the fells*, *high fells*, and so on. I assume *the fells* to be hills or rocky hill country. I have looked in several dictionaries and on the Internet for the word *fell* or *fells*, and no mention



is made of this specific definition. Why is this meaning omitted?"

Keep reading, please.

MARK MELHADO, of Santiago de Querétaro, Mexico, writes, "I'm losing about 15 minutes of sleep nightly because of the word *rebar*. I've checked several dictionaries, and they don't mention the word. Exactly what does it mean?"

I have my problems with dictionaries, mostly on the grounds that they don't do things their users have a right to expect, and they don't even do everything they

claim to. But you can't expect, nor do dictionaries claim, that they'll include every word that crops up—particularly if the dictionary doesn't call itself unabridged. Respectable estimates of the number of distinct English words range from at least 250,000 to more than a million, whereas America's best-selling dictionary, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*, has a mere 165,000 entries. It seems to me that words for non-U.S. land-forms and terms specific to the construction industry would be strong candidates for omission.

That said, *fell* in the relevant sense is defined in all four of the dictionaries installed on my computer's hard drive, and *rebar* is defined in three of them. (Both words appear in the *OED Online* as well.) A *fell* is "a hill or stretch of high moorland, esp. in northern England," in the words of the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, one of my favorites. And *rebar* means "a rod or bar used for reinforcement in concrete or asphalt pourings" or "a group of such

rods forming a grid," as *The American Heritage Dictionary*, my other favorite, defines it. My e-dictionaries are commercially available digitized versions of recent print dictionaries—not some special reference tool to which few have access. Since you both are obviously interested in words and their meanings, it's time each of you invested in a new dictionary. ▮

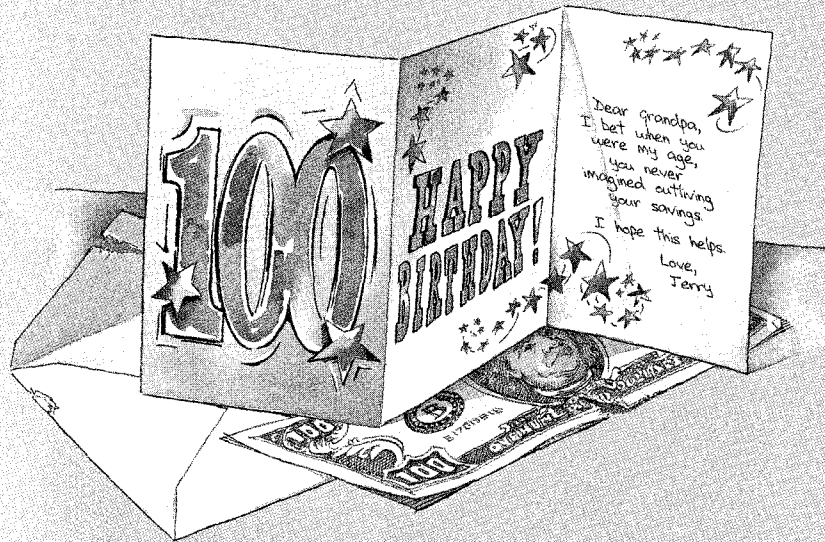
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ORIG CLARKE

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Thanks to modern medicine and healthier lifestyles, **Americans are living longer than ever. The average 65-year-old woman can expect to live until 87, and the average 65-year-old man to 84.** So it's easy to understand why workers today should plan for a 30-year retirement.

Allstate has a few ideas on how we can all help:

1. EXAMINE SOCIAL SECURITY.

Americans will not be able to rely solely on Social Security for a comfortable retirement. **The Social Security Administration projects that monthly government checks will cover an increasingly small percentage of the average retirement in the future.** There's debate as to whether Social Security should be repaired or replaced. But what's clear is that we need to reform it now.

2. BOOST RETIREMENT PLAN ENROLLMENT.

Company matches in 401(k) plans are one proven way to increase savings. Other innovative approaches companies can use include **automatic 401(k)**

enrollment, sometimes called opt-out plans; automatic increases in contributions as employees get raises; and encouraging both younger and part-time workers to participate. In one study, just switching to automatic enrollment resulted in a 30% increase in worker participation.

3. REWARD THOSE WHO SAVE.

Ultimately, everyone is responsible for their own retirement. That's why Allstate is a strong supporter of tax laws that help reward people for saving. Tax-advantaged savings vehicles such as **annuities and IRAs are two examples of products that can help America build a strong retirement foundation.**

Together, these ideas will help make sure that on your 100th birthday, you'll be able to afford the celebration.

Let's save retirement by saving for retirement.
THAT'S ALLSTATE'S STAND



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